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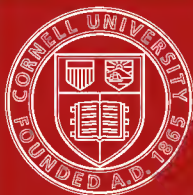
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"HE THREW HIMSELF DOWN IN THE GRASS, UNDER THE SHELTERING  
BRANCHES."





# FALCONBERG

BY

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AUTHOR OF "GOETHE AND SCHILLER," "GUNNAR," ETC.

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# FALCONBERG.

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## PRELUDE.

WHEN, in the year 1000, Leif, the son of Red Erik, launched his dragon-shaped galley upon the broad Atlantic and adverse winds and currents drove him toward the shores of inhospitable Vineland, did he know, that stout-hearted Norseman, that he was preluding a far resounding world-drama, the opening act of which was five centuries distant, and the closing scenes of which will extend, perchance, to the very boundary of time and eternity? It may be a daring hypothesis, but as I read in the Sagas the brief and sad history of that ill-fated colony, I seem to discover there, as it were, in bolder lines, the intellectual and moral prototypes of the Norsemen who flock, at this day, from the land of the Vikings to the ever newly discovered shores of the fabulous Vineland.

As I stood of late under the rotunda of Castle Garden and saw the blue-eyed and flaxen-haired throng pressing through the gate which was to admit them to the intenser miseries and joys of a more complex civilization,—as I endeavored to read the deep heart-histories of those strongly modeled countenances, whose primitive openness and comparative barbarism rendered them the more easily

legible, my thought paced swiftly over the tombs of the dead centuries, and Leif Erikson and Thorfinn Karlsefne with their storm-hardened bands emerged from the cloud-land of the past.

How manifold are the motives which have driven these restless wanderers away from the hearths at which their race had struck root, and from the homes which gave their childhood shelter! Methinks I see behind the suppressed ardor of yonder youthful face the eager soul of an Erik, aglow with visions of stirring adventure and yearning for worlds to conquer. He too, perchance, left behind him in the old home a father whose achievements had kindled the slumbering strength of his spirit, and whom in the last moment an ill omen convinced that his life-work was near its close.\* And that middle-aged man at his side with the ox-like brow, the rudely drawn lips, the stolid immobility of vision—what adverse winds and currents sent him adrift upon a world the charms of which he has not the eye to discover? He, perhaps, like the too incurious Bjarne, will, before many years, return home to tell the narrow-brained friends of the government a welcome tale of bleak shores, sterile soil and barbarous customs, and his report will be published far and wide over the land with a loud flourish of trumpets to frighten the faint-hearted, to calm the restless, and quell the hopes of the hopeful.

Down in the throng which is surging at my feet, now receding and now again pressing on with the sound and motion of the on-coming flood-tide, I catch a glimpse of a

---

\* Erik the Red had promised his son to accompany him on his voyage, but as he rode to the ship his horse stumbled, and as he fell to the earth he exclaimed: "There are no more lands for me to discover?"

bright maidenly face ; it is a face of the purest Northland mold, in which native strength is tempered as by the softest veil of womanly grace and tenderness. She, like the high-spirited Freydis, the daughter of Red Erik, may be destined to stand foremost in the daily battle of pioneer life, shaming by her own fervid faith some timid doubter, and girding with an adamantine armor of courage the heart which, though perhaps with a fainter rhythm, is to beat in unison with her own. And may there not have been, too, among Karlsefne's followers some large-hearted idealist whom the unrelieved sameness of human life in the old land and the inflexibility of its time-hardened institutions had restrained and saddened in his endeavors to fashion his destiny into conformity with some fervid, long-cherished vision of the soul ? If so, history has disdained to name him ; for the Saga is blind to the grandeur of a silent life, while the louder deeds of the sword resound far through the ages. But whether his prototype exist or not, I read the record of a spirited struggle against an iron-handed fate in the features of yonder black-coated man with that grave serenity of bearing and with that delicate tissue of wrinkles about his keen blue eyes and upon his dome-shaped forehead. Sorrows and disappointments, thronging the slow-paced years, have day by day worn thinner the cable which bound him to the land of his birth, until at length it was broken.

The noise subsides ; the hum of a thousand commingled voices which rises to me from below is softened ; a sal-low-faced little man springs up on an inverted barrel and reads in a loud grating voice, first in English, then in German, French and Norwegian (with the most atrocious accent, by the way) a brief document, giving timely counsel and warning to the immigrants. In the chance group

ings of the multitude as it is abruptly arrested in its onward course, I detect many a fleeting effect of color, and in the momentary juxtaposition of types from widely removed climes, I catch glimpses of historical and psychological truths which ingenious sociologists have failed to fathom.

A Norseman feels a just pride in the conviction that his nation, although its historic grandeur has long been a thing of the past, has always been pre-eminent for those solid family and home virtues which tradition has made a kind of prerogative of the Germanic races. His life, hedged in on all sides by a bulwark of strong ancestral beliefs and well-established customs and prejudices, offers no loop-hole for the larger vices to enter; and the smaller ones, which are recognized powers under all conditions of society, serve but to add a stronger spice to social intercourse and are apparently as essential to human progress and happiness as virtue itself. In Norway, at least, the social ideal is respectability, which means the aggregate unit of all the national foibles, strongly seasoned by a kind of aggressive ignorance of the world at large and a due admixture of declamatory, provincial patriotism. A society composed of elements like these has a long memory for past offenses; it is quick to condemn, slow to investigate, and incapable of forgiving. And what is society but an enlargement of the individual type? I have often wondered whether it is the duty of blood vengeance, as imposed by the Asa faith,—the sacred obligation to claim retribution for past insults,—which has been unconsciously transmitted through the long centuries from father to son and has left its indelible traces in the Norseman's laws as in his character.

Political pessimists have, with some show of plausibility,

defined the difference between a monarchy and a republic, as the difference between the tyranny of one master and the tyranny of many. Norway, to be sure, has a monarch, who is, however, only in the Greek sense of the word, a *tyrannos*, while public opinion, ever blindly and clamorously active, exalts mediocrity and banishes genius, because the former is conventionally attired and blandly conservative, while the latter is too apt to appear in some outlandish garb, intellectually as well as physically, and as experience shows, is not proof against novel heresies which may threaten to disturb the comfortable indolence of church and state.

These and similar reflections were suggested to me by the sight of a man who was sitting on the floor, not many steps removed from me, resting his chin in his palm and sending a blank stare out into the empty space. Judging by his looks, he could hardly be past thirty. His face was strikingly handsome, and of so pure a Norse type that it affected me like a sudden rush of warm air laden with the fragrance of Norse pines and wild flowers. The Northland memories were roused within me, and I became possessed with an ardent desire to read for once unerringly the deep soul-mysteries which had written their slow but ineffaceable record upon the sensitive surface of this countenance. These delicate features, once so quickly responsive to each passing mood from within, so readily moved into sympathetic concord with men and things, are, as it were, glazed over with some stony substance, hindering that finely graduated play of expression of which a countenance like this must be capable. Now some painful remembrance seems to be struggling to the surface; better, at all events, than that dead stupor, which paralyzes the energies of the mind, and, offering no resistance to the

wildest resolves, is even more dangerous than active despair.

That there was the shadow of a tragedy upon this life, it required no keenness of vision to discover, and as one, seeing the shadow of a cloud upon some fair landscape, raises his eyes to behold the cloud itself, so I turned from my sad-faced traveler, and, with the divine prerogative of the novelist, lifting the veil which hid his past, traced the slow intertwining of small events, of which he was the unconscious and helpless result.

I have singled out this one from the countless tragedies which daily enter through the gate of Castle Garden, like little sub-intrigues into the grand drama of our national life, not because it is any more frequent than a hundred others, but because it presents a fresh field of observation, as far as I know, as yet untrodden by poet or novelist.



## CHAPTER I.

### HOME-LIFE.

THE Right Reverend Bishop Falconberg was a man of a truly apostolic appearance, a fact which, as his enemies asserted, constituted his sole claim to the elevated position he at present occupied. He possessed, moreover, in an eminent degree, that peculiarly clerical accomplishment of uttering pious platitudes with a pompousness of voice and manner which, with an uncritical congregation, readily passed for inspiration.

The late King Bernadotte of blessed memory, who fortunately understood only a few words of Norwegian, but had a Frenchman's liking for handsome men, had made him knight and afterward commander of several orders, and the bishop had, during that monarch's reign, grown fat and prosperous in the perpetual sunshine of royal favor. In return, he had worshiped and served his benefactor with an unquestioning devotion which loyal citizens called touching. It was whispered, however, among demagogues and political malcontents, that the high-spirited king at times demanded a slight sacrifice of conscience from his most devoted servants, and that the bishop had occasionally been obliged to resort to his subtlest logic in order to reconcile his clerical office with that of a royal favorite. Like all men whose rapid rise is without any visible foundation of merit, Mr. Falconberg had his enviers, who were

not always scrupulous in the choice of the epithets which they attached to his reverend name.

During the reign of King Oskar, Mr. Falconberg's greatness had already become a well-established official fact, and the voices of opposition were silenced. When the bishop thundered from the pulpit against Catholic heresies, which had long been dead, and the great Antichrist, who resided at a safe distance in Rome, people flocked to hear him, and marveled at his pious fearlessness and the lofty flights of his rhetoric. The official press then began to make wondrous discoveries concerning the Falconbergs of by-gone centuries, and it was proved beyond a doubt, that the bishop was not a *homo novus*, but had come legitimately to his present eminence by the long transmission of ancestral genius. Some obscure chronicle revealed the fact that the family had emigrated from Denmark to Norway in the fifteenth century, which would hardly have been deemed worthy of record if the Falconbergs had not, even previous to that time, been foremost among the historic families of the united kingdoms. Again, it was proved that a certain Halfdan Falconberg had been among the first to abjure Catholicism and accept the Evangelical faith at the command of the court, and that a later descendant who, by a wealthy marriage and skillful management (which is the polite phrase for extortion), had accumulated a considerable fortune, had advanced a loan of twenty thousand crowns in silver to King Christian the Fourth, who, as is well known, suffered from a chronic want of coin.

The other Falconbergs of the present century (for his Reverence was by no means the sole heir to his illustrious name) were men whose chief merit consisted in their being relatives to one of the first prelates of the kingdom,—

a merit which that prelate was ever most willing to recognize. They were men whose neutrality of character, easy manners and unimpeachable loyalty made them available for almost any lucrative position which chance or royal favor might provide; and the bishop who vaguely felt that he owed them compensation for having received more than his due share of the family fund of genius, had at last the satisfaction of seeing them all comfortably nestled as eminent office-holders under the sheltering wings of the government. I say all, but there was one exception. The bishop's youngest brother, Marens Falconberg, who had inherited none of the family virtues except its tendency to corpulence, had been guilty of that most grievous of all offenses, a misalliance, and had been compelled to hide his shame in some obscure settlement on the other side of the Atlantic. He had, with some difficulty taken the degree of *candidatus theologiæ* before leaving Norway, and was now the pastor of a Norwegian congregation in one of the Western states.

The Right Reverend Bishop—to complete his portrait—was a man of a very convivial nature, bland, polished in his manners, condescending and yet dignified, a little loud of speech perhaps, if contradicted, and with that self-confidence and easy assumption of superiority which are so readily pardoned in a man whom chance and fortune have favored. This was at all events the official side of his character which the world knew and admired. In the bosom of his family he was, perhaps, less amiable, somewhat exacting at times, if not tyrannical, absolute in his judgments, intolerant of dissent, impatient of faults in others, and indulgent toward himself. He ruled his household with an iron hand, extending his jealous supervision even to the most trivial details of expenditure; and

that external garb of piety which his position compelled him to wear covered a multitude of petty foibles, greatly at variance with that large-lined statuesque grandeur which he was wont to display, when, arrayed in his official pomp, he thundered forth his philippics against human vice and folly. In spite of all this, I must do the bishop the justice to add that he was not a hypocrite ; he had himself not the faintest suspicion that he was insincere or even inconsistent. If he reasoned at all concerning his character and discovered some traces of the old Adam in it, he easily consoled himself with the reflection that even St. Paul, not to speak of Dr. Luther, had made similar discoveries, and both were nevertheless, by all posterity, accounted great and holy men. The world, too, and the king had indorsed him, and he was satisfied to abide by their judgment. If men's lives had to be stainless, what then was the good of the redemption ?

These, however, were not the doctrines which Mr. Falconberg preached to his children and to humanity at large. And still, is it to be wondered at, that his oldest son, Einar Finnsen Falconberg, as he grew up to youth and manhood, soon became aware of the discrepancy between his father's theology and his private practices, and began to draw his inferences concerning the validity of this theology accordingly ? During his early years he had suffered keenly from his parent's tyrannical supervision and excessive zeal for his welfare and improvement. The bishop, probably with the best intention in the world, poured into his mind an unceasing stream of the most miscellaneous learning, using him, whether consciously or not, as a touchstone whereby to test the virtue of every new educational system that happened to come to his notice. He started with the proposition that human nature was essen-

tially a compound of the vilest things, which must at all risks be eradicated, so as to leave that perfect blank upon which an unerring hand might inscribe the precepts of piety, wisdom and virtue. And, agreeably to this theory, he spent hours daily in tormenting the boy, resisting his most innocent wishes for the mere purpose of "breaking his will." Fortunately, he saw whither this system was tending before he had occasion to test its utmost effects, and dreading to become an object of his son's hatred, he suddenly wheeled round, and accepted the philosophy of some German metaphysician who after the manner of Rousseau taught that human nature was essentially good, and that evil found its way into the infantine mind only through the force of example. This theory, of course, required a total isolation from all vicious influences, and might have proved more satisfactory in its results, if the boy's mother had not foolishly interfered and by her distrust, her disobedience and her tearful appeals brought the whole beautiful system into confusion. She, like the irrational creature that she was, felt her heart swelling with pity toward this over-educated little fragment of humanity, for whose existence she held herself in part responsible, and it was owing to her perseverance and meek, mild-mannered obstinacy that the father, at last, when Einar was in his fifteenth year, threw all his systems overboard and determined that henceforth he would refrain from all forcible interference and be content to keep a watchful eye over the son's spiritual and intellectual progress. It was very hard, however, to carry this laudable resolution into effect; whatever ardor there may yet have been in the bishop's nature, which had not become congealed in the chilly heights of his official eminence, had flowed out freely toward this eldest born son; all the long-

gathering currents of his being, the intricate motives of selfishness and generosity, which went to make up his complex existence, had all served to nourish one strong but silent conviction, as the invisibly intertwining veins of water slowly gather in the breast of the earth into a warm and silent pool. He firmly believed that this bright-eyed and quick-witted boy, upon whose forehead Nature seemed to have put its stamp of nobility from the very cradle, had received in even a fuller measure than himself that genius which the family had guarded as its peculiar treasure, and that he was destined to occupy the same position in the next generation as his father had in this, looming up easily, by virtue of intellectual largeness, above the herd of men. Thus the bishop's name would be secured an honorable place among the historical dignitaries of the land, in times to come.

When Einar Falconberg at the age of eighteen entered the University, he was by common consent declared to be the handsomest man of his year. A few years of comparative freedom had enabled him to recover from the physical effects of his educational sufferings, which indeed seemed to have left no trace behind them, except an unconquerable antipathy to church-going. But this peculiarity hardly distinguished him from hundreds of his fellow-students, who understood by the church but the aggregate number of stone and wooden edifices in which men consented to be bored once a week for the good of their souls, and to whom religion was a mysterious something, outside and beyond their own sphere, mercifully provided by the Creator for subtle-minded metaphysicians (whose analytical destructiveness might otherwise prove dangerous to society) to test their skill upon, and for quarrelsome theologians to wrangle over.

Einar's nature was of that trustful, generous and open-hearted kind which readily invites to familiarity. The amiable *abandon* of his manners, tempered by innate good breeding, was as far removed from rudeness and aggressive forwardness as it was from shrinking humility or diffidence. To a handsome and talented young man, born in the very topmost stratum of society, the world puts on its gayest and most radiant aspect, and he sees no reason why he should not open his hand to receive its bounty and treat it with a similar liberality in return. Everybody liked Einar, and he was himself incapable of harboring any lasting resentment against anybody. He had his preferences, of course, and was not without a certain aristocratic fastidiousness in the choice of his more intimate friends; but if chance threw him into contact with any one whose manner jarred upon his nerves, he was not the man to yield to a hasty impression, but rather laughed inwardly at his genteel prejudices and let his abundant good humor flow without stint toward all. Of course people told him almost daily both directly and by implication that he was handsome, and he could hardly himself see the youthful brightness and faultless modeling of his features reflected in the mirror, without silently owning that he found no ground for dissent. There was, however, nothing especially striking in these features, unless indeed their soft radiance, harmony of form and absolutely perfect proportions were rare enough to challenge attention. You saw at once that it was a countenance capable of expressing the most delicate shades of emotion,—as changeable and sensitive as a still water-surface, which shivers into ripples at the touch of the least perceptible air-current. It is only in the north, I think, where all extremes of creation meet, that nature fashions these wondrously

delicate organisms, these alpine flowers among men, in whose being the life of a brief but passionate summer ebbs and flows with fitful pulsations. It was this flower-like stainlessness, this pure northern grace and innate nobility which found their expression in the soft curves of Einar's lips, in the frank appeal of his blue eyes and in the fearless simplicity of his whole bearing. It was not the fearlessness bred by ardent faith or strength of purpose, but rather by absence of suspicion and unconsciousness of wrong,—a mere child-like acceptance of life as it was,—an unquestioning confidence in oneself and in everybody who comes within the sphere of one's being. A man of such a temper is equally irresistible to men and women ; Nature has singled him out for her favorite from the very cradle, and the world is apt to accept his own estimate of himself, and to treat him with the indulgence which he unconsciously claims and practices toward himself and others.

It was very natural that Bishop Falconberg should feel an agreeable stirring of joy and pride whenever his eyes dwelt upon this promising son. After his admission to the University, he suddenly changed his conduct toward him, allowing him the most unlimited freedom, courting him by incessant praise and only grumbling occasionally at his expensive habits whenever an exorbitant demand was made on his treasury. He listened with untiring interest to Einar's accounts of his experiences in that gay young student-world which was daily unfolding its varied pleasures to his eager eye. The bishop had himself been a student and had himself had similar experiences. Hitherto he and his son, although living under the same roof, had really been as remote from each other as wandering stars, whose spheres once in a thousand years graze or



mutually intersect each other. Now they were drawn together for the first time by a real community of feeling, and the first thrill of delight at the touch of two souls which, with all their differences, could not disown a mutual sense of kinship, was even strong enough to banish, for the time, the dreary memories of the past. For that tyrannical father is probably a rare phenomenon who would not readily exchange the uneasy isolation of guardianship for the closer human fellowship which only a tacit admission of equality and a less uncritical devotion can foster.

Thus, at all events, ran Mr. Falconberg's reflections, as his son stood before him in the dawn of his young manhood, —a life detached from his own, and still, by strong, hidden ties mysteriously united to it. They were very admirable reflections, as every one will admit, and during the first years of Einar's college life they bade fair to establish the most delightful relation between him and his father. But when the young man had finished his preliminary course and had sustained with honor his *examen philosophicum*, the bishop's imperious temper suddenly burst out in a tempest of wrath which swept the sunny reminiscences of their recent summer life into a hopeless distance. It had always been a tacit understanding between them, the father claimed, that Einar should study theology and devote himself to the church. It was with this in view that Mr. Falconberg had wasted his hard-earned money on him, and, by the heavens, whether he would or no, he should obey. Einar, on the contrary, asserted that he had never in his life, tacitly or openly, cherished any such intentions, and he even freely confessed the deeply rooted repugnance he felt against the profession in which his father had reaped his fame and his honors. This was, of course, more than the old man could be expected to toler-

ate; he threatened to disinherit his son, to disown him, to deprive him of his name, and God knows what not, provided he did not retract his hasty words and unconditionally surrender. The son, however, was nothing daunted by threats, and in the end the bishop had to accept a compromise, proposed by himself, according to which Einar should take up the study of theology, but postpone his decision as to choice of profession until a maturer knowledge should have dispelled his foolish prejudice. Thus a respite was gained, and seeming peace was established; but, like a storm whose unspent energy still lingers, with threatening gloom and sullen mutterings, at the horizon's rim, the father's dissatisfaction continued to vent itself in caustic remarks and ill-natured criticisms, which were the more exasperating because they were never sufficiently definite to be met by open contradiction. Their sunny companionship in the memories of a common youth was a thing of the past, and was never to be restored.

It was not strange that these altered conditions should act unfavorably upon a creature so seemingly made for sunshine and so sensitive to external influences as Einar Falconberg. He could no longer work with that breezy stimulation of purpose which lies in having a definite end for one's exertions. It is true he had never been inclined to severe application, but he had had a vague sense of the responsibility attaching to his position as a member of a great family, and had not therefore absolutely shunned scholarly toil. He was abundantly supplied with those intellectual antennæ which absorb culture and even the solid substance of learning by a mere fleeting contact; and somehow he had always managed to do himself credit whenever the time came to test his attain-

ments. But now his evil destiny had compelled him to occupy himself with the very thing for which he had from his earliest years conceived a strong repugnance; and Einar shrank from anything unpleasant, as the tongue or any other sensitive object would shrink from contact with cold iron. He had always abhorred anything like dissimulation, and had never thought of claiming any credit for his own uncompromising honesty; he would have liked to believe that all the world was sincere, because sincerity was the very essence of his own character; and in spite of frequent paternal admonitions he could not bring himself to feign an interest which he did not feel in the long-winded recitals of theological fends and the half-rationalistic, half-pietistic exegesis of doctrine which dry, unimaginative professors—mere musty, shrivelled-up parchments of humanity—daily inflicted upon his unwilling ears. The consequence was that his attendance upon lectures became less frequent with every passing month, and in order to dispel the importunate reflections regarding his future which his equivocal position urged upon him, he threw himself passionately into the whirl of social life, laughed with the gay, looked solemn and apprehensive among grave-minded philistines, courted and a little flippant among the ladies, and felt a transient flush of joy at the easy triumph of his brilliancy and his personal attractions. But his mind was fast losing that serene equipoise, that fresh spontaneity of feeling which had made him appear among the throngs of youth like a newly-revealed beautiful being. It is inherent in such a temperament that it readily takes the color of its surroundings, and when this susceptibility to impressions becomes conscious, it is but one step removed from insincerity. Einar soon felt this, but with his clerical future

staring him in the face, did not care sufficiently for his own fate to mind whither he was drifting.

The years passed swiftly, and the unrecorded changes, wrought by the slow hand of time, became at last perceptible enough to give even a less sensitive mind than his cause for alarm. His cheap social triumphs began to pall upon his sense, and his mind was constantly agitated by restless moods and an ever-growing dissatisfaction with the world and his own attitude toward it. An all-conquering bitterness rose in some hitherto unconscious substratum of his soul; no transient pleasure could counteract it, and no self-soothing sophism banish it. His expenditures had long been largely in excess of his monthly allowance, and, as he had early made the discovery that his name was realizable in coin, he had had no scruples in permitting his debts to grow beyond hope of immediate redemption. He had hitherto succeeded in keeping his creditors at bay by liberal promises, but now they were becoming intolerably importunate, and Einar, seeing no escape from his dismal dilemma, felt his own spirits falling in proportion as the pressure of external annoyances increased. He knew that it would be impossible to go on concealing from his father what perhaps he had a right to know, but he had put off the evil day of revelation in the vague hope that some hitherto unthought-of remedy might unexpectedly present itself. His last experience of the old man's temper had left a strong aftertaste of bitterness, and it was hardly strange that he should exercise his ingenuity to the utmost to avoid a second encounter.

It was in the twilight hours one evening in the early spring that Einar sat in his room, deeply plunged in one of those moods—so common to sanguine men—of impa-

tient regret, interrupted now and then by fervid resolutions to abandon his old folly, provided his good fortune would only help him out of his present quandary. The bishop had just started on his annual journey of supervision through the diocese, and the temporary suspension of the fear which had for months past been haunting the son's mind, afforded his thoughts the needed leisure to concentrate all their energy upon the solution of the problem which life persisted in thrusting into his face. Then there was a sharp knock at the door, and Halfdan Bryn, a young man celebrated in the student world for his good voice and his loose habits, entered breathlessly and threw himself, panting, into an easy-chair. He informed Einar, in a narrative broken by frequent gasps and impressive imprecations, that an old Jewish usurer of ill repute in the city had bought up all claims against Falcouberg at a large discount, and meant to have him arrested, in case he could not satisfy him by immediate payment.

It is needless to dwell on details. The next day the usurer presented his claim and repeated the threat of imprisonment; for imprisonment for debt, although deemed highly disgraceful, was then no uncommon thing in Norway. Einar succeeded in procuring a day's respite, during which he vainly sought aid among his own and his father's friends. The debt amounted to about six hundred dollars,—a very paltry sum, to be sure, but still in Norway, large enough to cause a man considerable discomfiture. Agitated beyond control by visions of coming ruin, he was fast drifting into that reckless, irresponsible state, in which each fresh shock of pain only renders the moral sense more torpid, and at last paralyzes it. There was no time for deliberation, and in the last moment he caught at the only plank of safety which his dazed eye

could discern. He wrote his father's name to a check for the required amount, had it presented at the bank and discharged his debt. He was convinced that the public scandal of imprisonment would make a final rupture inevitable, while, if, on the bishop's return, he confessed the whole affair to him, there was every reason to believe that he would, in the end, condone the offense, and himself make the first approach to a reconciliation. But in an evil hour the bishop was induced to show an unwonted liberality toward an indigent relative whom he had visited, and telegraphed to his bank for money. The bank replied that his account was already overdrawn, whereupon the prelate, much in wrath, demanded, also by telegraph, that no effort should be spared to apprehend the criminal who had dared to forge his name.

Einar learned that the police were at his heels just in time to take a hurried farewell of his mother, who wept over him, and gave him a letter to his American uncle, but could do nothing to hinder his flight. In the disguise of a peasant, he boarded the English steamer, which departed that very evening for Hull; and two weeks later he found himself plunged headlong into a new and bewilderingly strange world, with all the fair hopes of his life blotted out behind him, and only the regret, the bitterness, and the heart-ache surviving.

## CHAPTER II.

### A NORSE SETTLEMENT.

It was more than a month after the day when I saw Einar Falconberg sitting in that hopeless attitude of dull benumbed grief under the rotunda of Castle Garden. He had spent the intervening time in aimless roamings from city to city striving vainly to find a clew that might guide him through this tangled labyrinth of life. It was a sunless path he had trodden and nocturnal fancies thronged his mind. Had then this hasty deed, wrenched, as it were, from his soul in a moment of frenzy, left the stamp of ineffaceable ignominy upon his forehead? He had gone in quest of work, first in New York, then in Chicago and St. Louis, but pitying glances at his white hands and delicate skin or even dark frowns of suspicion had met him wherever he came. "Pray, in what fairy tale were you born, sir?" a bright-eyed little Chicago woman had said to him. "You look for all the world like a disguised prince. If we could afford to entertain a perpetual joke in the shape of a coachman, we should be happy to engage you. But I regret to say that we can't."

The thought that he was forced to bear this manner of address from a stranger had stung him to the quick. His heart went forward with a great yearning toward the land of his birth, but the memory of his crime rose like a great black wall between him and it, keeping it forever

inaccessible to his returning footsteps. The solitude in the midst of the crowd was to him deeper than that of the primeval desert. It beat upon his sense like a positive obtrusive force, and at other times seemed to inclose him like a cold translucent veil, transmitting sounds and objects only with blurred outlines and depriving them of both shape and meaning. I can imagine that a dainty bird, suddenly transported from his airy companionship into a colony of beavers, would look with a sad puzzled frown upon the doings of these busy water-workers, which must appear so utterly unintelligible to him, and still in his little heart feel a profound contempt for their sordid utilitarian habits. Einar's attitude toward the busy land to which a hostile fate had driven him was hardly less anomalous. At times, as he walked through the streets and wondered at the bewildering aspect life was assuming to him, a sudden dread would vibrate through his frame like the shadow of some great calamity, vaguely seen from afar. His reason seemed to be wandering beyond his reach, leaving him in utter darkness. He then thought of the letter to his uncle and determined as his last refuge to seek him.

It was on an afternoon, early in June, that he saw from the distance the little Norwegian settlement, put down in the official postal guide as Pine Ridge, but known to the settlers of Viking descent as Hardanger. He had walked in two days nearly fifty miles from the nearest railroad line, and was nearly overcome with heat and exhaustion. Then the sight of a little red-painted house with white gables, perched on a neighboring hill-top broke through his torpid sense; he paused abruptly, shaded his brow with his hands, and a sudden rush of tears blinded his eyes. It was the first remembrance of the dear, far-off



home he had met in this great unintelligible land. He threw himself down in the grass, under the sheltering branches of a huge, low-limbed pine, and there, hidden away from the pitiless world, gave free course to his tears. And like a heart-sick wandering child to whom the near threshold of home gives the first sense of safety, he fell fast asleep and dreamed that he was again a boy in school and that his teacher scolded him because he did not know his lesson. When he awoke the sun stood already low over the western ridge of hills, and the sound of cattle-bells fell pleasantly upon his ears from the near meadows. He started up, seized his valise, and looked once more at the red-painted house on the hill-top. It seemed to him that he had never had so sweet a sleep since he came to America. The former lethargy, in which the thought moved numbly as if clogged by the touch of clammy cobwebs, was swept away, and he felt with gratitude something of his old joy in life reviving. From the neighboring glen, through which a stream swollen by recent rains, plunged with continuous brawl, came the well-remembered, long-drawn notes of the Norse cattle-call, and a flaxen-haired maid came yodeling down the slope, followed by a long procession of black, brown and white cows. In the bottom of the valley glittered a bright, narrow lake, which wound itself northward between grassy meadow-slopes interrupted here and there by broad tracts of uncleared forest. How could this beautiful bit of Norway have been transplanted into the heart of this mammoth-boned, huge-veined continent? It was very puzzling, but nevertheless wondrously delightful.

As Einar turned his face toward the settlement which seemed to be climbing laboriously up the western hill-side, he began to discover many features which soon con-

vinced him that he was not in Norway. The town looked singularly like a large crab or cuttle-fish with an easily definable center and numerous irregular arms stretching upward, downward and sideward in all imaginable directions. Around the square there were, perhaps, half a dozen solid stone houses and three or four plain white-spired churches, and from this starting-point large and small streets of various length sparsely lined with diminutive houses of a nondescript architecture, straggled away at their own sweet will and with a truly democratic diversity of purpose.

As Einar Falconberg was ascending the slope from the lake and the strange town with its unseen inhabitants became less of a fantastic abstraction and more of a momentous reality to him, he began to feel a growing disinclination to throw himself like a culprit on his uncle's mercy and perhaps expose himself once more to harsh condemnation, contumely and disgrace. Was there any presumption in believing that his past sufferings had amply atoned for his guilt, and was it not probable that Providence (for he had come to believe vaguely in an all-governing will) had given him this chance in order that he might rebuild his fair name and perhaps in time attain a new and hitherto undreamt of happiness? To a man of his sanguine temper happiness was naturally the last and highest aim of human endeavor, the idea of usefulness was as yet foreign to his thought. The utilitarian philosophy which the moralists of this century have revived has not yet penetrated to that secluded corner of the world where fate placed his cradle, and if it had, it would have passed over his head without mingling with the deeper springs of his being. He was, like the majority of his race, by nature an idealist.

When Einar had reached the remote end of Main street, where an improvised rail-fence marks the boundary between the town of Hardanger and the adjoining farms, he had, perhaps, for the first time in his life discharged the difficult duty of forming a resolution, unaided by the pressure of inevitable circumstances. He would not make himself known to his uncle, and to avoid recognition would assume his middle name, Finnson, abandoning forever his claim to membership in the illustrious family of the Falconbergs. He would seek some employment among his countrymen, and do his best to efface the sad record of the years that lay behind him. He breathed out freely as if some heavy weight had been rolled off his breast when the last scruple was silenced and the resolve irrevocably taken.

In an unbroken field, not far from the street, covered with the stumps of felled trees, some fresh, others slowly rotting in the ground, Einar discovered a small, rudely built log house of an unmistakably Norse aspect. Making his way through the deep reddish mud, in which bits of planks floated at irregular distances, he entered a chaotic little garden where blooming auriculas and a solitary rose-bush grew in friendly proximity to youthful cabbage plants and potatoes. In front of the door lay a little heap of newly split kitchen wood, and an axe of a distinctly Norse physiognomy was struck firmly into the end of the block. A long fishing-rod stood leaning against the thatch of the roof, and two more rested horizontally upon pegs stuck into the timbers of the wall. Everything was so charmingly primitive, or, as Einar thought, so charmingly Norwegian. He stopped upon an insular plank in the midst of the mud-pool and a joyous smile lit up his countenance as he gazed upon these

well-known objects. Through the half-opened door came the sound of the dear familiar tongue which he had hungered so long to hear. He drank in the indifferent words and stood listening with a kind of eager fascination.

"I am afraid you will never amount to much as a farmer, Magnus," said a deep, rudely articulated, bass voice. "You don't seem to get the hang of things, however much one tries to teach you. I can't quite afford to plough for you every year, although, God knows, I am willing enough to help where it seems reasonable."

"Yes, Nils," answered a thin, piping treble. "I can't complain of you, and I never did, so help me, God. No, Nils, you have been a good neighbor to me, and that I have always said to Annie Lisbeth too: 'Annie Lisbeth,' I have said, 'God knows what would become of us, if it were not for Nils Nordernd?' But you know, Nils, it was my bad luck that I was born on the water. And, since I came over to this country with my little one, I have often been pretty vexed with my mother (God have mercy on her soul), because she played me that bad trick to bring me into the world on a fishing schooner, instead of giving me a decent birth like another Christian man. For there I breathed in that devilish fish-smell until I became half a fish myself. You can't teach an otter to dig for angle-worms, like a mole. He hasn't got it in him, and he can't do it. No, God help me! I see I'm pretty badly off, and since this devilish ague got into my bones, I should be quite willing, if it were not for the lass, to sell my whole miserable carcass for a quid of tobacco."

"It has hardly come to that yet, Magnus," answered the bass voice, with a perceptibly gentler intonation. "And any way, it is no use whining. Send the girl up

to my house after dark, and my wife will give her what you may happen to need. Farewell, and a speedy recovery."

Einar advanced cautiously toward the door and knocked. He was met by a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a large, grave, good-natured face, surmounted by a thick crop of light, towy hair.

"Is this the settlement of Hardanger?" asked Einar in order to say something.

"To be sure it is," answered the man. "Whom do you seek here?"

"I seek work."

The grave man remained silent for some moments, during which his blue eyes dwelt with a critical look upon Einar's countenance.

"Judging by your looks, you seem to be an honest fellow," he said, at last. "Come in. A countryman is always welcome."

He threw the door open, and Einar entered. The room was small, and filled with the mingled odors of fish and smoke. In a corner was a rude stone hearth, the floor was black with long-accumulated layers of dirt, and the unpaneled timber walls were covered with kitchen implements, old clothes, and fishing apparatus. Upon a bed made of unplanned planks roughly nailed together, lay a little man with a large hooked nose, thin lips, and a pair of small keen black eyes.

"Ah, ah!" said the invalid, raising himself upon his elbows and regarding Einar with vivid interest. "Gentlefolks out walking to-day? Lately from Norway, eh?"

Einar explained that he had left Norway some months ago.

"Take a seat, sir," \* said the long-limbed farmer, who was evidently the one who had been addressed as Norderud. "Any news from the old country?"

"I have not seen a Norwegian paper since I left home," answered Einar, seating himself upon a solid wooden block near the door.

"What is your name?"

"Einar Finnson."

"A man of study?"

"Yes, I have been at the university."

"I am afraid that wont help you much here. What we need here is strong arms to break up the untilled land. Your hands seem rather delicate for that kind of work. Look at Magnus there;"—here Norderud pointed to the man in the bed;—"he too has studied in his way—navigation I think he calls it. He is a regular water-rat. And you see what he has come to."

Einar glanced at the invalid and owned that if his condition was the result of study his own outlook was not a cheerful one. Magnus heaved a long sigh, as if in recognition of the melancholy allusion, and seemed profoundly conscious of his own impressiveness as an example of what needless learning could lead to.

Norderud again lapsed into silence, pulled out his knife and began to whittle in a slow, meditative manner upon the knots of a hickory stick which he held in his hand.

"And how about the Storthing?" † he broke out at last, sending again that same searching look into Einar's face. "I suppose they are talking a great deal and doing

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\* I have rendered the Norwegian "far," with "sir," as the English "father" would give an erroneous impression.

† Parliament.

nothing as usual, except voting money out of the peasants' pockets."

Einar replied modestly that he had never taken a very hearty interest in politics, and that he knew very little about the doings of the Storthing.

"What!" exclaimed the farmer gruffly. "Take no interest in politics? What then do the young men in Norway take an interest in? Dancing-parties and theaters and all that sort of nonsense, I suppose; the country might probably go to the devil for all they would care."

The young man began to feel very uncomfortable. Norderud was, evidently, in spite of his Norse origin, hopelessly utilitarian in his views of life, and there would be no way of getting on with him. He was conscious of having produced an unfavorable impression,—an experience which, his late wanderings notwithstanding, could never lose its sting of painful novelty to him. The obtuse sense of this peasant was evidently impervious to those charms of youth and personal beauty upon which he had hitherto based his hopes of happiness and success. It was therefore with a feeling akin to resentment that he arose, and extending his hand to the sick man, whom in spite of his silence he divined to be the host, bade him good-bye, and in his usual hearty way expressed the hope of his speedy recovery.

"Ah, yes, yes," answered Magnus plaintively, "you are a fine young man. I see it by his face, Nils, that he is a fine young man. And"—again addressing Einar—"you must not judge the dog by his skin either; Nils has a way of showing his teeth and growling, when he don't mean to bite at all. For there aint a man in the town who is safer to come to in trouble than Nils Norderud, and if you want help, young man, you had better

go to him, for with no one else will you be surer to find it."

"Now stay your foolish tongue, Magnus," broke in Norderud in a voice which was evidently intended to be fiercer than it was.

They shook hands once more and Einar and Norderud left the house together. It must have rained heavily in Hardanger during the forenoon; for wherever the Main street took a momentary rest from its steep climb, the water stood in large, shallow pools, reflecting bits of blue sky with its accessories of cloud and sunlight. There was no pretense of a sidewalk, and the soft sod which covered the edge of the road yielded to the foot and sucked it down so that it sometimes required much vigorous pulling on Einar's part to enable him to keep pace with his long-legged companion. Norderud walked on with large strides, and seemed for a time equally unconscious both of the mud and Einar's presence. His dress was of a rough, dark-blue cloth, closely resembling the Norwegian *wadmal*, of a semi-modern cut, quite innocent of style, and devoid of all the picturesque details which characterize the national costumes of Norway. On his head he wore a round felt hat and about his neck a vivid silk handkerchief, the ends of which were tucked into the bosom of his dark single-breasted waistcoat. He stooped heavily, carried his head a little on one side, as if he were trying to grasp some puzzling thought, and habitually had his hands plunged deeply into his pockets. There was a look of grave solidity about his whole figure, a placid strength and self-confidence, naturally fostered by the isolation of pioneer life and an early independence of thought. His face was deeply furrowed by wrinkles, among which the two obliquely converging ones, separat-



ing the region of the cheek from that of mouth and chin, were the most prominent. Like most men who are themselves lacking in the social graces, he had a deep-rooted contempt for gentility of manners and external polish, and was perhaps inclined to judge them *a priori* as a sorry device to conceal internal worthlessness, or, as the conventional substitute for the solider qualities of mind and heart. A rugged pine which feels in its trunk the accumulated strength of centuries looks probably from its stormy height with a similar contempt upon the dainty white-stemmed birches and the slim-fingered willows which find shelter under its crown.

Gratitude was not the uppermost emotion in Einar's mind, as, trudging wearily in Norderud's footsteps, he beheld the primitive aspect of the town which he had chosen for his future home. He was rather conscious of a rising irritation at the discourtesy with which the farmer treated him, and was just devising some method by which without offending him he might rid himself of his oppressive companionship, when Norderud suddenly turned round and again measured him with his critical gaze.

"You look tired," he said. "Come, let me carry your bag."

"No, I thank you, it is quite unnecessary."

He was quite prepared to yield to further urging, but to his surprise Norderud dropped the question and again marched on. He heartily repented of his politeness. After half an hour's walk they stopped at the western extremity of the town in front of a stately buff-colored house with a comfortable, spacious look and surrounded by a broad piazza. The green shutters were thrown open in the first story, and Einar saw some blonde, curious women's faces gazing at him through the uncurtained windows.

"I shall have to bid you good-bye here, sir," said he.  
"Perhaps you could tell me where I can find a hotel?"

"Where do you intend to go?"

"Somewhere where I can find lodgings for the night."

"That you can find with me if you have nothing better."

Einar hesitated for a moment, then entered through an open gate a short avenue of young trees leading up to Norderud's mansion. He was dimly aware that he was closing—irrevocably closing—a chapter in his life's history, and that a new, greater and more momentous one was opening. Hence his hesitation. The simple act of entering a hospitably inviting house seemed full of meaning.

## CHAPTER III.

### NORDERUD.

NILS AMUNDSON NORDERUD was the oldest settler in Hardanger. His history, simple and unromantic as it may seem, still carries a wider significance from the fact that it possessed certain features in common with that of thousands of his countrymen who have since followed in his footsteps, and with that of thousands who are yet to follow.

Nils Norderud's father had been a houseman in the district of Hardanger and the son had early felt with some impatience the narrowing conditions of his birth. In his twentieth year he had married the woman of his choice, and when three sons had been born to him in quick succession the forecasting care for the future of his progeny had led him to ponder more deeply over the hopelessness of his lot, and finally determined him to accept the risk of transplanting his already well-matured life rather than to eke it out in a soil which promised nothing but dependence and penury. Accordingly in the year 1848 he set sail for the New World, and, after a brief sojourn in Michigan, took land under the homestead law in the wild backwoods of Minnesota. There was a vastness of scope in the pioneer's solitude upon the broad breast of this huge new-born continent, a refreshing sense of illimitable freedom, a constant appeal to all the larger faculties of his

soul, and like a seed-corn which after a long entombment in an Egyptian sepulcher is planted in fertile soil, he felt the hidden energies of his being shooting forth with a lusty superabundance of strength and his hitherto cramped manhood developing its stature in the scale of dimensions according to which Nature had originally designed it.

Flocks of immigrants of various nationalities followed annually in Norderud's footsteps; his land rose rapidly in value, and a succession of liberal harvests removed the possibility of want for many years to come. Gradually as the comparative security of his position relaxed the strain upon his nerves, he began to feel more keenly the disadvantages of his isolation and to yearn for a wider companionship. The home memories were aroused within him, and he resolved to lay aside an annual amount for the benefit of countrymen who might wish to tread the same road to fortune which he had trodden. By his aid several of his acquaintances from Hardanger were enabled to take land in his neighborhood, and before long the valley resounded with the tinkling of Norse bells and with the echoes of the Norse cattle-calls.

The new settlers, with an impulse common to their race, sought to gather their own kith and kin about them, and thus it happened that for many years the paths of Norsemen, whose aspirations had been strong enough to conquer their natural *vis inertiae*, were seen to converge toward this isolated little settlement where the clasp of eager hands and the sound of familiar voices were always ready to greet them. With every passing month the pioneer's ax broke an ever widening pathway for the sunlight into the heart of the primeval forest, the little green clearings with their improvised log-cabin grew into large farms with roomy barns and solidly timbered houses, and

Norse speech and Norse memories bound all this widely scattered neighborhood together as by a strong invisible tie. The Indians, who had at first assumed a very hostile attitude toward the fair-haired invaders and even deprived them of two or three scalps, now became scarce and the few who remained, with the innate magnanimity of the noble savage, gradually changed their policy in proportion as the settlers grew in numbers.

It was a day of joyful triumph to Norderud when in the seventh year after his emigration, the farmers, at his suggestion, determined to organize into a congregation, to build a church and call a Norwegian minister to preach to them. They had felt themselves little better than heathens hitherto, with their youngest children unbaptized and themselves cut off from the sacraments; although, to be sure, they had been zealous enough in their attendance upon the meetings for prayer and worship which Norderud had held at his own house every Sunday, since the earliest days of the settlement. They had all been accustomed to look upon him as a leader, and he had, without arrogance or undue assumption of superiority, naturally come to regard himself as a man whose voice was weightier and whose opinions, founded upon a large experience, were entitled to a greater respect than those of the herd of his fellow-creatures. Whenever his deep bass voice was heard in their primitive councils the farmers sat listening to him with a solemn gravity and with a sort of brooding attention which were in themselves an evidence of the significance they attached to his words. Now Norderud advised that they should call the Rev. Marcus Falconberg to become their pastor, and as no one knew of any objections to urge against Mr. Falconberg, the call was tendered and promptly accepted. Within

six months the church was completed. It was a square wooden structure, surmounted by a disproportionately small bell-tower, externally barren of ornament but displaying within a half-pathetic attempt at a reproduction of the Norse arrangement of choir, nave and galleries.

About this time a new epoch began in the history of the settlement. As civilization pushed its intenser life ever farther westward and the impetuous spirit of the century made itself felt in the hurried din and rush of locomotives, the fertility of the Hardanger valley could of course no longer remain hidden, and from all sides, foreign farmers, artisans and tradesmen poured in, in an ever thickening current, mingling their noisy and discordant lives with the primitive peace and simplicity of the Norsemen. About the spot where Norderud's farm was located the population gradually centered, and within two or three years, a thriving village, counting some twenty-five hundred souls, had climbed more than half-way up the hill-side, and had sent forth two long antennæ in the shape of unbuilt, but indefinitely prolonged, streets up toward the wall of the ever-receding forest. Norderud had had the opportunity to sell part of his land in lots, and had gained a very considerable fortune by the transaction; he had a large, handsome, though architecturally unpretentious, mansion, built right by the side of the old farm-house, erected a business block in the town, called "The Norderud Block," and began to be agreeably conscious of that added dignity which wealth and influence gave to native skill and merit. As the years advanced, however, and the aspect of the town changed, Norderud's ambition grew, and he was at times haunted by a suspicion that in municipal affairs his voice no longer carried the same weight as it did in earlier

days. He was frequently aware that his Yankee neighbors, by dint of their far-sightedness and swiftness of thought, outwitted him, and he saw with a slow-growing irritation that their farms on the same area yielded nearly double what his had ever produced. He had of course, like the stanch old Norseman that he was, looked with a smile of contempt upon their strange new-fangled plows and sowers, and reapers, and had only clung the more tenaciously to the stout, old-fashioned Norse implements which his father and his father's father had handled before him, and the excellence of which a long succession of centuries had tested. At last, however, when his neighbor, Tappan, a very good-natured and harmless man, proposed to lend him his plow and afterward his harrows, Norderud, not liking to be unneighborly and regarding the thing rather as a good joke, laughed his skeptical laugh and accepted the offer. The next year (there was no need for indecent haste) when he was once more in his jocular mood he bought a similar plow himself, and slowly but surely, harrows, sowers, reapers and other "destructive innovations" followed. The next logically inevitable step in Norderud's career was to send his younger children to the public school, which the village at its first organization had established. His pastor, Mr. Falconberg, gave him an emphatic warning, and at length attempted to use his authority, as a shepherd of souls, to hinder so disastrous a step. He called the common school godless, demoralizing, "a very hot-bed of all manner of abomination," and threatened his parishioner with eternal damnations, if he did not remove his sons from these pernicious influences. But Norderud did not belong to that genus of men which grasps with hot-headed zeal after innovations and then with equal haste retires. He had

taken this step after mature deliberation, and was not to be moved. Many of the other Norse farmers whose confidence in him the years had strengthened, in this instance, too, thought it quite safe to tread where he had trodden; and within another year the clumsy agricultural implements of antediluvian make were exchanged for slender, bright-painted contrivances—"the latest results of time." English speech mingled with, and soon became predominant over, the Norse, and blue-eyed and flax-haired children thronged the school-house of the village.

This gradual change of base on Norderud's part was evidently charged with even graver results than he himself had anticipated. But he had once honestly taken his position, and he did not shrink from the consequences. He did once believe that Norway held the foremost rank among civilized nations, and that what people in Norway did not know could hardly be worth knowing. It had never entered his head to doubt that they were in a sense a chosen people and therefore a more direct object of God's care than Englishmen, or Turks, or Frenchmen, or other remote nations who spoke unintelligible and barbarous tongues. But the incident with the plow and the harrows had pierced the hard crust of his mind and made it accessible to the planting of new convictions. For Norderud, though quite deaf to oral arguments, had a great keenness of vision for the interpretation of facts; and the knowledge gained from these wrought its slow way into his mind and in due time stirred it to action. He was well aware that there were those in the congregation who, with the pastor, were inclined to ascribe sordid motives to whatever he did, but suspicions of this kind never disturbed him. This Americanizing process, with him as with thousands of others, was at first but a half-



conscious one; it was a tangled and hidden growth, which like young spring-flowers, peeping forth from under the cover of last year's dead leaves, surprise us by their sudden bloom and perfection. Thus in the end Norderud, too, knew where he stood. He had chosen to follow the current of time rather than to strive vainly against it, and at length be thrown up like useless dross or barren deposits upon its shores.

Such was the man into whose hands Einar's good fortune had led him.

The sun was near its setting and its long rays fell slanting through the young leaves of the orchard and sprinkled the grassy lawn in front of the house with little quivering bits of subdued light. The spring had been late in its coming; the dead petals of apple and peach blossoms still covered the grass with a thin carpet of intermingled pink and white, and the air was thick with the odors of blooming locust and hawthorn.

"It is a very beautiful garden you have, sir," said Einar, as they walked down through the sunlit avenue.

"The women-folks have been too busy in the kitchen-garden," replied Norderud, walking out upon the lawn to cut off the broken branch of a cherry-tree. "They haven't had time yet to look after the orchard."

They ascended the steps to the piazza and the host opened the door to a large, airy and clean-swept hall. While putting down his valise and giving a hasty touch to his toilet, Einar heard in the room on the left, which was the sitting-room, the rhythmic strokes of what he at once knew to be a hand-loom, and, on entering, he saw a tall blonde woman with a snowy white cloth bound about her head seated at a large Norse loom near the window and plying the shuttle deftly. As her eye fell upon the

stranger she arose quietly, shook the front of her dress, brushed it with her hands and advanced toward him.

"This is Mr. Finnson, Karen," said Norderud, "a young man lately from Norway. He will be our guest for some time."

The matron, whom Einar at once concluded to be Madame Norderud, wiped her right hand carefully with the back of her apron and extended it to the guest.

"You are very welcome, Mr. Finnson," said she. "Guests from Norway have been scarce here of late years."

"You are very kind, madame," replied Einar, with a polite bow. "It is a very long time, too, since I was welcomed anywhere in my native tongue."

Mrs. or Madame Norderud, as she was usually called by the farmers, was a woman in the neighborhood of fifty, and her dress and manner showed far less deference to the customs of the land in which she lived than did those of her husband. She wore a tight-fitting waist of blue cloth, fastened in front with hooks, and a skirt of the same stuff which reached but a little below the ankles; a large bunch of keys depended from her belt. There was a quiet air of housewifeliness about her which was very winning, and her calm blue eyes seemed to diffuse a kindly light over everything they rested on. Her features, although covered with a net of minute wrinkles, were of a very pure mold and gained quite a new beauty when lighted up by her rare smile. Einar felt gratefully the effect of this hospitable smile, as he emerged from the chill atmosphere of Norderud's silent criticism into the warm radiance of her presence. He was conscious of having made a favorable impression upon her and could not suppress a childlike gratitude to her for consenting to like him.

Einar, in the meanwhile, at Norderud's request, had seated himself in a large, leather-cushioned sofa, which covered half the length of the wall between the southern windows. Madame Norderud had retired for a moment to the kitchen and now returned with a large bowl filled with milk which she offered to him.

"You have walked far," said she. "You must be thirsty. Drink this first and I will bring you more."

He took the milk and, yielding to her friendly urging, drank it to the last drop. It seemed so delightfully strange to him that this quaint Norse custom should have survived so long in the heart of a foreign civilization.

Norderud, who was anxious to learn what social and political changes had taken place in Norway during the last decade, once more questioned his guest concerning the tendencies of the Storting, and especially manifested a lively interest in Bjornson and Sverdrup, for both of whom he entertained the warmest admiration. While they were talking the door suddenly burst open and a young girl, very much flushed and out of breath, rushed in and, to Einar's great relief, interrupted their political discussion.

"Mother," cried she, "Princess was in the rye-field and I chased her out."

"You did well, child," said the mother quietly. Then turning to Einar, "This is our youngest child, Ingrid. Shake hands with the gentleman, Ingrid."

Ingrid, on discovering the handsome young man on the sofa, blushed crimson and in an embarrassed and greatly subdued manner wheeled toward him and hesitatingly extended her hand. Having successfully accomplished this, she made a sudden dash for the door and disappeared. The father, forgetting the momentous political question

which had occupied him, laughed and looked up with an air of quiet amusement, while the mother turned a grave countenance toward Einar and said apologetically :

“She is only fifteen years old, Mr. Finnson—not out of school yet.”

This little scene, insignificant though it seemed, long remained fresh in Einar’s memory. Norderud’s parental indulgence was a human trait which he distinctly understood ; it revealed an untold wealth of tenderness in this rugged man’s bosom, and made Einar suddenly feel at his ease with him. The sight of this fair-haired daughter naturally suggested some allusion to Norderud’s family, which, he was informed, included five sons, three of whom were born in Norway while two were native Americans. The two eldest were married and had bought farms in the neighborhood ; two were engaged in business in the town and lived at home, and the youngest was away studying at an eastern college.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A MUSICAL BATTLE.

EINAR had not remained very long in Norderud's house before his suspicion was confirmed that his host did not cherish a very cordial regard for his native land and its institutions. He was fond of conversing about Norway and displayed a startlingly accurate statistical knowledge of the relation between exports and imports and other problems of political economy ; but he had no hesitation in pronouncing his decisive judgment upon the actions of the ministry, principles of government and other profound mysteries which Einar had been accustomed to regard as too deep for common comprehension and had looked upon from afar with a neutral content or with ignorant admiration.

"The Norwegians are a very good sort of people," Norderud said, "but they are hardly out of their swaddling clothes yet. But mark my word, young man, the time will come when they will kick through the useless rags and throw them away. For there is the right sort of stuff in them and they can't be kept in eternal babyhood."

Einar usually listened in silence to these and similar prophecies and contracted his brow with an air of meditation, as if he had suddenly been stimulated to deep thought. The truth was that he found it hard to reconcile

this apparent lack of patriotism, on Norderud's part, with his sturdy common sense and his undeniable benevolence and goodness of heart.

In the meanwhile, as the days passed by, the young exile began to feel with some discomfort that the problem of his destiny was as far from a solution as ever. He was aware that he must be the object of much secret comment among the members of this busy and rigidly regulated household, to whom an agreeable young gentleman like himself, of a pleasure-loving temper and unused to toil, must be a very anomalous phenomenon. With the same amiable hopefulness with which he had formerly kept his creditors at bay he had now succeeded in staving off the unpleasant problems; but he soon discovered that the atmosphere of this crude village with its bustling activity was not congenial to the kind of life he had laid out for himself, and the new-kindled glow of hope within him grew paler as the impetuous season advanced. There seemed to be no comfortable vacant niche here into which he might drop easily, without taking the trouble to fill out the wide *lacunæ* in his previous training. And still, as an academical citizen and a gentleman of culture, with a vast store of miscellaneous knowledge at his disposal, he could not but feel his imagined superiority to these toiling mortals, absorbed in sordid cares and unable to rise into a serene contemplation of scholarly abstractions, while at the same time he secretly envied them and vaguely yearned to be one of them.

It was one pleasant afternoon, as Einar was sitting on the piazza, trying to blow away his restlessness in vigorous puffs of cigar-smoke, that Norderud, having just returned from the village, took a seat at his side and addressed him in his usual blunt fashion.

"What can you do, Mr. Finnson?" said he. "It is time now that we should find some occupation for you, and you know I am ready to do what I can to help you."

Einar's thought skimmed rapidly over the list of his accomplishments, but the impartiality of his tastes prevented him giving preference to any one calling, as there were at least twenty other things which he would like equally well to do.

"I can do almost anything," he answered at last, hesitatingly; "or, rather, I am willing for the moment to try any thing you may select for me."

"That is to say that you can really do nothing," rejoined Norderud, harshly. "Judging from your case, I should be inclined to believe that the effect of university training in Norway was to unfit a man for everything."

Einar felt something akin to wrath kindling within him; but seeing the imperturbable gravity of the farmer's countenance and his evident solicitude for his welfare, he checked his rising indignation, and, with forced self-control, answered:

"I do not wonder that indecision in a man of my age must appear strange and even unpardonable to you, Mr. Norderud. But if you knew the circumstances of my past life you would perhaps not judge me so harshly."

Norderud leaned forward, rested his elbows on his knees, and fixed his grave, testing glance upon the student.

"It is not my business to judge men," began he, with a slow, measured intonation. "I leave that to God, who alone has the right to judge. I only want to help you, but you make it deuced difficult to me, that is all I have to say. Still," added he, rising, "tell me, have you ever learned to play the organ?"

"Yes; I have had some practice in playing both the organ and the piano."

"If you had told me that at once we might both have been spared this discussion."

He walked rapidly toward the gate, and Einar lapsed once more into profound absorption, striving vainly to find a key to this new enigma. He hardly knew whither to turn, but it mattered little if he could but once more regain his sorrowful liberty.

It was in this state of mind that Norderud found him when a few days later he requested him to bear him company to the church, where he would have an opportunity to show his skill as a musician.

"I have bought an organ for the church, lately," said Norderud, as they started out together. "And I thought that I ought to have the right, too, to appoint the organist. I proposed you, but the pastor had another candidate, and we had some unpleasant squabbling about it in the trustees' meeting yesterday. The end of it was that another meeting was appointed for to-night, and a competition between the candidates will decide the result. The salary is not much, but it is enough to give you a fair start. The trustees and part of the congregation are probably waiting for you now."

Einar felt a sudden flutter running through him at this startling announcement. He stopped abruptly under one of those green-stemmed elm-trees whose crowns, like colonnades with interlacing arches, lined the street, and gazed excitedly at his companion.

"But why have you not told me before?" exclaimed he. "I may only disgrace you now. I have had no time to practice."

"Never mind," answered the other, in his imperturba-



ble bass. "You said you had had considerable practice. If you do your best, it is all that will be expected of you. If this fails, we shall have to find something else."

It was useless to expostulate with one so inaccessible to reason. Norderud appeared to him like a creature of a different genus, whose modes of thought were utterly alien to his own. He heard the church bells calling the people together, and their clear, strong notes vibrated through the summer air and through his own nerves, calling up to his Norse fancy all manner of solemn associations from the days of his childhood, when other bells had drawn his reluctant feet to the house of worship in a distant land, or on week-days had stirred him with vague apprehension as they gathered the black throngs of mourners about some freshly opened grave. With this dim agitation filling his mind, Einar made his way through the groups of blonde-headed men and women who had gathered on the front steps of the church, and in Norderud's company entered the plain, square edifice.

Hardanger, since the boundary of civilization had long passed it on its westward way, was at present a place where stirring events were of rare occurrence, and where, consequently, so slight a thing as the contest between two aspirants for an organist's place assumed an air of grave significance. The Indian fights had long been forgotten, the Vigilance Committee, with its brief and dramatic existence, had already passed into mythical history, and the settlement was either too civilized or not civilized enough to have matrimonial scandals to feed the public need of excitement.

Einar, blindly following Norderud's guidance, passed rapidly up the aisle of the church, throwing, as he went, a hasty glance at the simply attired men and women who

filled the pews. He was, in spite of his agitation, dimly conscious that he must appear like a very distinguished figure amid this rustic crowd.

The structure of the church was the plainest possible imitation of the venerable basilica style; a long rectangular nave with uncarpeted floor and two rows of somber-tinted pews, an apse hedged in by a rudely carved wooden railing, and containing a square altar covered with a red velvet cloth, and on the wall opposite a gallery above which the organ loomed up toward a white stuccoed ceiling.

Norderud stopped and talked in a low voice to a gray-haired man in one of the pews and his protégé remained standing in the aisle, feeling somewhat uncomfortable under the noiseless bombardment of critical glances which were leveled at him from all sides of the church. A white mist hovered before his eyes and even the nearest objects appeared indistinctly remote. It was a great relief when finally his guide, whose whispering seemed to have no end, took his arm and led him up the winding staircase to the organ. He sat down and opened at random a book of sacred music which was placed on the stand before him. Glancing at the fly-leaf he read the name "Helga Raven" written in a clear feminine hand. He turned over a couple of leaves until his eye was arrested by the words, "As the Hart pants after the Water-Brooks." It was a simple arrangement by Spohr; an air with which he had long been familiar. He struck the first chords and all the volume of latent excitement which had been laboring confusedly within him seemed to shoot in a clear, swiftly gathered current through his nerves and to be tingling out through the tips of his fingers. The melody rolled away in great free waves, filling the air or transforming it into living and pulsating masses of

sound. And it filled Einar's soul, too ; with every new measure, as the tones poured out their intense life upon him, he lost all sense of dependence upon the composer and sailed along rapturously upon the strong tide of melody which seemed to be rising from some deep well-spring of his own being. As he reached the bottom of the page and flung forth the last full-toned chords in a triumphant staccato, he threw a quick glance behind him and saw a throng of eager upturned faces gazing up to him in breathless wonder. His fingers half unconsciously lingered on the keys, then wandered away with rapid transitions into a fervid minor movement, touching the theme remotely, and again gathering it with tender gradations into a full-swellling focus of sound. Thus he sat—he knew not how long—wrapt in this joyful melodious monologue, merely obeying the tuneful promptings of his own nature, when the thought suddenly struck him that his rival, whom he had quite forgotten, was probably awaiting with impatience the end of his improvisations. So he dropped one by one the more complex accessories of thought in the variations, turned on the full force of the organ and ended with a slow, full movement of simple solemnity.

As he arose he saw Norderud standing at his side looking down upon the audience below with an air of triumphant satisfaction.

“If you will play like that to us every Sunday,” said he, turning to Einar, while his slow smile spread over his features, “I will add a hundred dollars to your salary, and say ‘thank you’ in the bargain. There is no man in this town, or woman either for that matter, who can beat you, and the little Raven might just as well throw up her hand at once.”

Einar hardly gathered the full meaning of this allusion to "the little Raven," and in the joyful agitation of the moment did not think of connecting it with the name he had read on the fly-leaf of the music-book. He tried hard to show an unperturbed countenance, but could not, in spite of all his efforts, prevent the pleasure he felt at this first manifestation of approval, on Norderud's part, from imparting a vividder flush of animation to his mobile features. He was dimly ashamed of the emotion he experienced, and in the momentary need of some outward movement to give vent to his inward tumult began to stroke his thick blonde beard which he had allowed to grow unchecked since the day he left his home.

"I shall wait until Miss Raven has played before introducing you to the pastor," whispered Norderud. "Look, there they are both coming! You needn't mind, if he shows you his teeth and growls a little at you. His humor is probably somewhat overcast. He is aware beforehand that he is defeated."

Einar turned his head quickly and saw at the top of the stairs a burly, middle-aged gentleman with a large massive head, cold gray eyes and close-trimmed grayish side-whiskers. His broad form moved aside slowly as if it were a somber back curtain in a theater revealing some warmly flushed scene of beauty behind; for following close in his footsteps came a tall, slenderly built young girl. Einar strained his eye and could hardly suppress an exclamation of wonder. She sprang upon his vision like a sudden rush of mellow, fragrant air on a chill spring day; her very apparition seemed to be a mysterious appeal to some higher, darkly divined plane of his being, and a quick pang darted through him at the thought that his own late triumph must be her defeat, and perhaps a cruel

frustration of her long-cherished and well-founded hope. The sight of youth and beauty naturally awakens all the generous impulses of a man's heart; and Einar, to whom the love of gain had been utterly alien as a motive of action, now felt his joy blended with bitterness. He inwardly reproached Nordernd for not having told him that his rival was a lady, and he reproached himself, too, for having heedlessly and ignorantly rushed into a contest which his sense of chivalry would have shown him to be unequal.

The young lady, in the meanwhile, had taken her seat at the organ, and Einar had, from where he stood, a good opportunity to admire her at his leisure. She crossed her hands listlessly in her lap, and as the pastor stationed himself behind her, raised her large, candid eyes to his with a look of irresistible appeal. But the pastor shook his head and raised his hand deprecatingly, then bent down and whispered something in her ear.

"It would be a mere farce, Mr. Falconberg," she replied, in an intense undertone; "all I could do would be to furnish a somber background upon which his magnificent performance would stand out in more brilliant relief. And you will admit that would be rather an extraordinary generosity toward an enemy."

"Don't be a goose, Helga," grumbled the pastor, impatiently. "Not this excessive modesty, pray. Remember it is a serious affair both to you and your mother, and it is a Christian duty on your part to put your foolish pride in your pocket."

Einar stood near enough to hear every word that was said, and he swore in his heart that his reverend uncle was a brute. How could he assume this censorious tone of reprehension toward a creature so marvelously com-

plete, so absolutely adorable? His generous indignation, however, made him quite forget that his own attitude was becoming every moment more conspicuous, and that hundreds of curious eyes were just then directed toward him. His gaze dwelt upon Miss Raven with a full unthinking intensity, of which she was instinctively conscious, although her own eyes were staring with a dimmed intentness at the opening bars of the fugue she had selected to play. The superb lines of her head, with all its sunny northern splendor, recalled vividly to Einar the image which his boyish fancy had created of Ingeborg when he read Tegnér's "Frithjof's Saga." Her lustrous yellow hair was gathered behind in a single massive knot, from which the bright curls rippled downward with a lusty luxuriance of growth. The clear brow, the delicate, sensitive nose, the line of whose bridge approached the parallel to that of the forehead, the pure curves of the lips, and the finely balanced chin, were all in their way magnificent pieces of modeling, but nevertheless seemed unimpressed with the stamp of any strong, or, at least, easily legible individuality. In their capacity for expression, Einar thought, they were positively boundless; in their plastic completeness they were simply divine. Imagine this countenance breathed upon by some vivifying passion, and—what need afterward of declaiming about ideals? They were once for all within reach. Thus ran the Norseman's reflections; he had hitherto conscientiously disbelieved in love at first sight, but he found in this instant that he had come to the end of his philosophy.

Miss Raven raised her hands from her lap—they were hands of a firm, delicate-lined purity—and put her fingers on the keys of the organ. She began abruptly, traveling

with a cold precision of touch through the long, solemn avenues of tone, following the often intricate unfolding of the musical phrase with a delightfully distinct articulation, and with here and there a flush of warmer coloring, when the composer rose above his common key of deep, devout meditation into a more impassioned strain of entreaty. The pastor stood frowning behind her, and could hardly restrain his growing impatience. Again and again he pulled his red-and-yellow silk handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with a greater elaboration of gesture than so simple an operation seemed to demand, and when Miss Raven had at length finished, apparently as abruptly as she had begun, he once more bent over her, and said quite audibly and with a touch of irritation in his voice:

"My dear, I certainly credited you with more sense than you have shown on this occasion. Do you suppose these peasants have the patience to follow you on these mile-long, rambling tirades? What do they understand of Bach and all his long-winded sentiment? You might with equal profit talk Hebrew to a babe. Well, you certainly cannot blame me. I warned you beforehand. I told you not to try to shoot over their heads."

"No one will ever think of blaming you, Mr. Falconberg," answered she, lifting again that simple, earnest glance of hers to her officious persecutor. "I thank you for your good advice, but prefer to bear the responsibility for my own actions."

"You are a very headstrong little creature," murmured the pastor, with a somewhat forced attempt at playfulness. "Come, let me conduct you out through this crowd. You will probably not care to stay and listen to the deliberations of the board of trustees."

She pulled up the light summer shawl which she had allowed to glide down below her waist while she was playing, gave one grand toss of her golden coronet of locks and let them shower down on the outside of the shawl. The simple, unconscious grace of her motions as she arose, took the music-book from the stand and departed leaning on the pastor's arm, impressed Einar even more than the marvelous beauty of her face. He stood still, gazing with a supreme heedlessness of appearances toward the staircase where she had vanished, when Norderud came up and grasped him somewhat ungently by the arm.

"Come," said he, "I want you to talk to the pastor, before the meeting of the board. No one knows what effect that may have."

"Mr. Norderud," began Einar, feeling in the afterglow of his excitement equal to anything in the way of heroic self-sacrifice, "I am sorry to be obliged to tell you that I cannot consent to accept the position which possibly your generous efforts have procured me. My sense of chivalry—"

"Oh, bosh!" interrupted the farmer gruffly. "If you are determined to act like a fool don't imagine that you can make me one. And I warn you not to talk to Mr. Falconberg about your sense of chivalry and that sort of twaddle. To-morrow you may do and say what you choose, but to-day I insist upon your doing as I tell you."

Einar made no answer; a wide gulf seemed suddenly to separate him from his imperious benefactor, who would force his services upon him against his will; and at the same time he could not suppress a sense of pity as for a creature made of coarser clay who was incapable of comprehending the loftier motives which inspired his actions.



It would, no doubt, have surprised him if he had known that Norderud from the height of his practical intellect felt a very similar stirring of paternal compassion for him, as a young enthusiast who was too hopelessly deficient in common sense to understand what was for his own interest.

In the vestibule which divided the body of the church from the street, they found the portly pastor looming up beside a small, bald-headed gentleman with a thick blonde mustache and a pair of mild blue eyes peering forth through his round horn-bowed spectacles.

"Ah, my young friend," broke forth the pastor, extending his hand to Einar without awaiting an introduction; "What miracle of heaven can have induced a youthful Orpheus like you to emigrate from his Thracian home and take up his abode in this unmelodious wilderness? Allow me to make you acquainted with my friend Doctor Van Flint. Mr. Finnson—Doctor Van Flint. The doctor was just growing dithyrambic at the prospect of pressing your musical eloquence into the service of religion and humanity, and I confess I was doing my best to restrain him."

A slight shiver ran through Einar's frame at the sound of his uncle's voice. A host of remote memories rushed back upon him, and the past seemed to lift its warning finger against him threatening disclosure and inevitable disgrace. The pastor bore a very strong resemblance to his father, of whom, indeed, he seemed to be a somewhat coarser and cheaper edition. He did not possess the bishop's cautious refinement of bearing, and the capacious comfortableness of his attire was far removed from the scrupulous elegance which distinguished his more prosperous brother. But his large massively hewn features, although lacking as it were the finishing polish, were still

molded after the same type, and his ponderous frame rejoiced in the same imposing development of front and the same sacerdotal pomposness which the Evangelical prelates of Norway have inherited from their Catholic predecessors. He talked with a certain sonorous magnificence and with an over-conscientious articulation as if he delighted in the sound of his own voice and was determined to make the most of it.

Einar hardly knew how to define the impression his uncle made upon him. He disliked the patronizing unceremoniousness with which he treated him, but still felt vaguely drawn toward him by a mysterious sense of kinship which he dared neither admit nor openly deny. He therefore silently shook his hand and then turned toward Doctor Van Flint, whom he briefly thanked for his good opinion of his music.

"My dear sir," said the little doctor in a low contented voice which fell very pleasantly upon the ear, like the gurgling of hidden waters, "there was a wealth of rhythm and melody in your play which fairly startled me. Brage\* must have showered his gifts upon your cradle. All the time while I listened to your play I was haunted with visions of St. Peter's with the papal choir, and Leipzig with its Gewandhaus concerts—in short, all the tuneful memories of my youth came rushing in upon me."

"Our doctor, you will observe, is given to hyperbole," remarked Falconberg, giving his friend a patronizing pat on the shoulder. "But I do admit that even the young David playing to the original Philistines could not have made half so favorable an impression as you, beleaguering the ears of these modern representatives of that wor-

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\* The god of music and poetry in the Scandinavian mythology.

thy race. But, permit me as a friend to whisper something in your ear—*purgatam aurem* as Horace calls it. Don't be too confident. Musical impressions are proverbially evanescent. And now I believe we have exhausted two mythologies besides the Bible in order to express our admiration of your performance. Even if it brings you no further advantage, you ought to be satisfied."

"I deeply regret, Mr. Pastor," replied Einar, gravely, "that in spite of your kind words you are half forced to look upon me as a very inconvenient if not positively hostile phenomenon. I assure you that if I had known that my rival for this position was a young lady, and besides a protégée of yours——"

"Mr. Finnson means to say," peremptorily interrupted Norderud, whose presence the pastor had hitherto ignored, "that if I had not deemed it best to say nothing about this whole affair to him he might have had time to practice and might consequently have done still better."

"Well, well, young man," said Falconberg without heeding Norderud's interruption, "we will not quarrel about that. Every one is nearest to himself and in your case I should probably have acted very much as you have."

Once more he shook his nephew's hand and retired to the vestry followed by Norderud. The doctor and Einar walked down the street together, both warming up gradually to a consciousness that they were mightily pleased with each other.

"If you have nothing better," said Van Flint, when, after fifteen minutes' walk they reached a garden where tulips, crocuses and other flowers of fervid bloom flung forth a great blaze of color toward the pale-tinted sky, "I hope you will do me the honor to spend this evening

with me. A cup of tea, a cigar—well, you must know by this time what our wilderness has to offer.”

The doctor opened his gate and they sauntered along the graveled paths toward a small house built in the Swiss cottage style, which seemed to be struggling like a Lao coön in the leafy embrace of two huge woodbines.

Late in the evening Norderud called and announced that the organist's place belonged to Einar.

## CHAPTER V.

### SCHOLAR IN THE WILDERNESS.

THREE days after Einar had made his *début* as an organist, he was pleasantly surprised by an offer from Doctor Van Flint, whom he had seen daily in the intervening time, to take at a very moderate rent a couple of furnished rooms in the upper story of the latter's house. He cordially expressed his sense of obligation to the Norderuds and henceforth became an inmate of the doctor's family.

Among the many riddles which the young settlement had been called upon to solve in the process of its growth, the case of Doctor Van Flint was not the least exasperating. It seemed very hard to conjecture what could have induced a man whose tastes and the whole tenor of whose mind had manifestly fashioned him for a life in a large and intellectually animated society to take up his abode among the crude pioneers on the western border of civilization. The village matrons, among whom the voice of Mrs. Falconberg, the pastor's wife, was the loudest, asserted that an unrequited passion had turned all the sources of his being into bitterness, and made him seek oblivion far away from the scenes which must have stung his heart with their ever fresh memories and kept open the wound of his sorrow. The pastor, and many other male skeptics with him, laughed at this beautiful theory, which would have been plausible enough if the doctor

had at all been that compound of condensed bitterness which romantic matrons fondly believed him to be. He was, it is true, somewhat pessimistic in his views of women and politics; both of which, however, exerted a potent fascination over him, and were his favorite themes of conversation.

The doctor was understood to belong to a very prominent family in the East which had played a not unimportant part in the revolutionary history of the country. His father had been a genuine type of the provincial patriot who believes in home patronage, political as well as industrial. He had delivered many a stirring apostrophe to the American eagle on the anniversaries of the national independence; had dressed himself and his family in home-manufactured goods, and had disbelieved with equal vehemence in Old World despotism and Paris millinery. His active patriotism had made him a staunch defender of the protective tariff system and the possessor of a large calico-printing establishment. He had spent his days in excessive toil, laboring with a breathless eagerness for the extension of his business, and had died a premature death, leaving a very handsome estate to his three sons, who, in their turn (with one exception) grew rich and dyspeptic, and promised fair to transmit, increased in hard-earned gold, the sad lesson of their lives to a new generation of descendants.

Hiram Van Flint, although reared in an atmosphere so uncongenial to scholarship, had early contracted a love of reading, a strong distaste for what his father termed "practical life," and a reverence which almost amounted to a religion for the abstract pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. He had been born with the tastes and instincts of a scholar, and had, from his bookish seclusion, passed

his silent criticisms upon the blindly zealous and hurried lives of those, who, from their imagined elevation, had pitied him as an impractical enthusiast and dreamer. He had long looked with eager eyes toward that land of promise beyond the sea, and as soon as his father's death gave him pecuniary independence, he immediately embarked for England, and after a sojourn of several years in Italy, France and Germany, took up his residence at one of the Swedish universities, where he discovered a new and then almost untrodden field of research in the ancient literature of the Scandinavian race. Having reached the age of thirty he returned to Germany with a very extensive plan for a work on old Norse literature, and had just taken his degree of *Philosophiæ Doctor* at the University of Leipzig when pecuniary embarrassments forced him to turn his face once more toward America. He managed to save enough of his fortune to enable him to live without excessive economy, and having by this time become thoroughly possessed with the idea of the work which was to sanctify to a nobler purpose a hitherto aimless existence, he came to look upon all other issues as merely accessory to this one absorbing purpose. With a view to supplementing his fragmentary knowledge by the constant study of customs, manners and modes of thought among the modern representatives of the Viking race, he made frequent journeys through the Norse settlements in the West, and, liking the people well, was at last induced to take up his permanent abode among them. He then built his vine-sheltered little cottage in the town of Hardanger, and, while dividing himself with impartial zeal between the pastor's autocratic ecclesiasticism and Norderud's extreme democracy, gathered up golden stores of material for his "History of Old Norse Literature."

A maiden aunt who, in her unlettered simplicity, had always looked up to him as the shining light of the family, had followed him into his Western seclusion, and in the capacity of a housekeeper stealthily removed from his path those little perturbations which are apt to mar the happiness of a scholarly bachelor.

Einar's arrival had been a perfect Godsend to Dr. Van Flint, and the doctor's companionship was no less welcome to Einar. An erudite and agreeable young Norseman, and, moreover, a university man, was the very thing which the doctor had always felt the need of, as a kind of ideal representative of his future public, by the light of whose sympathetic knowledge he might test his more daring theories, and whose cooler judgment might restrain him when he was tempted to soar above the solid earth of fact. To Einar, apart from any material advantage, the newness of Van Flint's personality and the rich, mellow evenness of his temper, made it easier to begin that ideal career which in the first moment of reviving strength he had marked out for himself; with him it seemed easier to forget the sombre background of life and to build a fair structure of hope into a clondless future.

One afternoon, as the young exile returned from the church where he had been practicing, he found his host kneeling on the ground before one of the flower-beds with a large paper spread out before him. A curly wreath of light hair which encircled the back of his head from one temple to the other fell in straggling locks beneath the brim of his white Panama hat, and his round, good-natured face wore an air of profound abstraction.

"If I ain not disturbing you, Doctor, is that a map of Iceland you have there?" asked Einar, pausing, with his thumbs in his vest pockets, before his eccentric friend.



"Finsson, ah?" exclaimed Van Flint, after having gazed at the Norseman for some moments with a look of but partial recognition. "No, it is not a map of Iceland. It is, on the contrary, a map of this flower-bed; but, as you will observe, its shape is exactly that of the Saga-isle."

"Not exactly symmetrical, I should say, for a flower-bed."

"No; I admit it is not a thing of beauty," replied the doctor, rising and whipping the dust off his knees with his handkerchief—"that is, as far as the form is concerned. It was originally merely a whim of mine, but it proved more fascinating than I had anticipated. Here you see all the localities mentioned in that broad-breasted, storm-voiced, large-molded tragedy, '*Njals-Saga*,' marked out and symbolically indicated. I am not naturally over-fond of symbolism, but in this case, you will find that it has its excuse for being. There you will notice, for instance, the plains of Thingvalla, bounded by four carnations—two white, and two scarlet. It was there where the quarrels of Norsemen were settled, either by the white passionless verdict of the law, or by the more deep-tinged decision of the sword. Here at Lithend grows Halgerda,—a fiercely flaming tiger-lily, in her baleful beauty,—and I have for want of anything better made the sage, cool-headed Njal at Bergthorsknoll a hoary, bloomless, everlasting, thrown into picturesque relief by his crimson-petaled wife, Bergthora, in whom the blood runs with more passionate vigor. Here is Fiddle Mord in the Rangrivervale, here Hanskuldstede, etc. Now, if I read that Skarpheddin rode from Bergthorsknoll to Fleetlithe, I know exactly what road he took, I know what houses he passed, and knowing his feuds and friendships, I can imagine, with tolera-

ble correctness, what was Skarpheddin's state of mind on this or that point of the journey, and I can conclude very nearly how he looked. *Eecce*, I have spoken."

Einar had not learned yet that the doctor was capable of soliloquizing in the most picturesque phraseology and with a kind of absent-minded vehemence, which, somehow, made him very attractive upon any theme touching the history of the ancient Norsemen. Neither had he learned that his friend always took interruptions good-naturedly, remembering for the moment nothing beyond the vivid visions which inspired his eloquence; if suddenly checked, he would throw puzzled glances about him, and then as his actual consciousness overmastered the arctic visions, laugh retrospectively at his own ardor.

"Who but you, Doctor," remarked Einar, "could have invested a dry, bloodless science like geography with such a brilliancy of color?"

"My friend," rejoined the other, with energy, "the geography of the Saga is, literally speaking, anything but bloodless. You cannot point to a single place which has not its legend of blood. Look over there! There is the scene of the Orkneyinga Saga, with its brother-fends and the murders of the Earls; over yonder I have a similar illustration of the Fareyinga Saga, the scene of the life and death of that large-souled hero, Sigmund Bresteson. If all this is child's play, as you may possibly think, it has at least the advantage that it gives me the exercise I need, and, moreover, keeps my favorite study before my mind, when otherwise I should be bored."

The doctor rolled up his chart with a most affectionate touch, and marched at Einar's side to the piazza, where they lighted their cigars and sat down in the large leather-cushioned easy-chairs. The piazza was open toward the

north, but on the western side a steel-wire net gave support to a semi-translucent hedge of morning-glory vines, which with an eagerness of aspiration, quite disproportionate to their strength, climbed upward to the ceiling, threatening a total eclipse of the broad landscape which lay, bathed in the evening sun, in the valley below.

"Did you know," began the doctor after a few minutes' pause during which he had been blowing rings of cigar-smoke, "that we have an embryonic Halgerda in this town—as exquisite a combination of the angel and the devil as any Saga heroine you could name?"

"No," retorted Einar with sudden animation. "I should like to see her. What is her name?"

"Her name is Helga Raven, but I should rather advise you not to see her, at least not until you have girded yourself with a more solid armor of Philistinism like your compatriots in this place. To an ardent young temperament like yours she is positively dangerous. But, by the way," he added with a flash of memory in his eyes, "you have seen her, my boy. You saw her in the church. You inflicted upon her the first defeat she has probably ever known, and possibly the last she is ever destined to experience. But beware! I have warned you. I should not be surprised if she revenged herself by conquering her conqueror. The instinct of vengeance runs deep in the Norse blood."

"Doctor," broke forth Einar, with a visible effort at self-mastery, "I don't like to disagree with you; but I do think it is outrageous in you to call such a woman a devil. I don't mind telling you that I never saw a fairer vision of womanhood in all my life."

"Bravo," cried the doctor, with a flourish of his cigar. "I could have foretold it! You have gone the way of

all flesh. But you are mistaken about my calling her a devil. On the contrary, I admit that the angel is at present predominant in her. And for that matter, you know that there is a substratum of devilry in all womanhood, which, however, the repressive influences of our tyrannical civilization prevents from coming to the surface. Barbarism is more transparent. Imagine, if you can, Miss Raven transplanted into a more barbaric age, where there are no despotic proprieties to choke up the volcanic undercurrents of her nature, and if my psychological insight is not all chimerical, you would see bursts of wilder heroism than any history has as yet recorded. Have you noticed, for instance, that gaze of hers? Did you ever see a larger gaze in a woman? Her gravity has a luminous depth which baffles the sturdiest sense with its bewildering suggestions of vast, unknown regions beneath. Her gayety, which is rarer, is, in spite of its occasional grotesqueness, essentially of the same kind. It is not the airy, shallow ripple of common feminine mirth, but the irresistible up-welling of strong forces within—a rich, full-toned murmur, like that of warm springs which have their sources deep in the earth's breast, and listen to its passionate heart-beats. Therefore, judge her not by the vulgar standards of society. So pure a phenomenon as she is worth all and more than all society put together. Behold, I have spoken."

This was Van Flint's favorite phrase with which he usually ended his more impressive harangues. Einar had sat listening in astonished silence. The doctor's vehement eloquence had awakened a sudden fear in his mind that it might have a deeper cause than he had hitherto suspected.

"If I may judge by your language, Doctor," said he at length, while a vague jealousy flushed his words with

something resembling irritation, "you must have penetrated deep into the hidden sanctums of Miss Raven's heart. So profound an analysis can hardly be the result of a mere hasty acquaintance. I too rejoiced in the subdued richness of her personality—something like a closed rose-bud, showing through its green calyx deep streaks of crimson, and promising a great glory of color when the warm breath of love shall have disclosed all its hidden fervor. But of the latent barbarism you speak of I could discover no trace."

Poor Einar had secretly gloried in this simile, and had been perpetually haunted by it ever since it invaded his mind, at that first meeting in the church. It was almost a relief now to be able to utter it. He looked fixedly at the doctor, to observe the effect, but the latter sat gravely gazing at the cigar smoke which rose in blue, vanishing lines into the clear air, and seemed absorbed in some inward contemplation.

"Finnson," he said at last, suddenly collecting himself, "we are both growing poetical, and that is a bad sign. I told you it was a dangerous subject. I know Miss Raven well. She has been my pupil for four years. I have taught her French and German since she was a little girl. She has served me as a capital Saga study, and I am profoundly grateful to her for it. She and Ingrid Norderud used to come here together twice a week, and very satisfactory pupils they were. I refused to take any pay, but Norderud insisted upon paying for both, and I had to yield. Ingrid, as you know, is a good deal younger than Miss Raven, and if you would take the lessons with her for the future, I should regard it as a favor. Miss Raven will probably not continue next year. At present we have a vacation."

"There is time enough for discussing that, later," replied the Norseman. "But tell me, have you any objection to introducing me to your pupil? There is something which I am very anxious to tell her."

"Objection? Not at all. It is inevitable that you should meet her. In this place everybody meets; and you may just as well meet your doom to-day as to-morrow. If you are ready, we will start after supper."

The doctor struck a match and lighted his cigar, which, in the heat of his eloquence, he had neglected; then walked briskly over to the Icelandic flower-bed, but presently returned, laid both his hands on Einar's shoulder, and looking at him with his warm, winning smile, said:

"You are jealous, my boy. Don't deny it. You can't conceal that kind of malady from me. I know the symptoms from bitter experience. But how can you fear an old, dusty mummy like me as a rival? Don't you see, it is too preposterous?"

The young man could not but respond to that appealing smile. He took his friend's arm, and as the bell just then rang in the dining-room, they walked out together to supper.

An hour later they were both on the way to the nest of the dangerous Raven.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RAVEN'S NEST.

WHILE marching along under the young trees in the cool dusk of the summer evening the doctor delivered himself of a harangue abundantly sprinkled with philosophical maxims and observations. It was well, he thought, that his friend should know something of the foibles and peculiarities of Mrs. Raven, with whom he would, no doubt, during the coming years be intimately associated. And therefore, with the very friendliest intentions, the doctor set out to analyze the poor old lady's character, and naturally delighting in his own sagacity, continued his work of dissection until in the end he had to look back with half-amused horror upon the havoc he had accomplished.

"She is really a very good and kind-hearted woman," he concluded with saying; "only, as I remarked, a little giddy for one so old, a little irascible and terribly sore about her dignity. But *sat sapienti*, you may judge for yourself."

"Yes, that is to say, after having been first told by you how to do it," responded Einar with a gay laugh.

They halted at the gate of a small, white-painted frame house, with the gable fronting the street—a typical specimen of that barren utilitarian architecture which is so deplorably prevalent in our western towns and cities. A

small but luxuriant flower-garden surrounded the cottage and a large, umbrageous hop-vine clambered over the front porch. Having rung the door-bell, they were admitted into the hall by a fresh-looking young maiden of unmistakably Norse aspect, whom the doctor addressed as Annie Lisbeth, and honored with a few jocose remarks in her own mother-tongue. In an aside to Einar he explained that she was a former pupil of his and a daughter of old Magnus, the fisherman.

In the small uncarpeted parlor which they now entered the fading daylight was still further obscured by mosquito nets and thick lace curtains; as for blinds, Mrs. Raven looked upon them as a pernicious Yankee invention, and, although admitting their usefulness, was determined to exclude them from her dwelling. The whole appearance of the room was as un-American as could well be imagined. The painted floor, the long rows of glazed earthen flower-pots in the windows, the small rugs scattered here and there in front of the divan and the easy-chairs, the large round mahogany table placed before the ponderous sofa in the corner, the severely angular style of the horse-hair-covered furniture—all betrayed a scrupulous exclusion of our aggressive national life and an obstinate adherence to that which tradition had made dear and familiar. It was as Van Flint remarked, the old story of Mrs. Partington and the Atlantic Ocean.

Presently a pair of folding doors were pushed aside and Mrs. Raven advanced toward the doctor with a rapid and almost unnaturally youthful step. She was a tall, spare woman with a small, bird-like head surmounted by a lace cap with floating cap-strings. She shook the doctor's hand and made the stiffest imaginable bow to Einar, whom his friend took the liberty to introduce after his own elabor-



ate fashion with numerous commendations; but his eloquence for once seemed to produce but a slight impression; for the old lady listened with an air of severe indulgence, as if to say that he might practice his tricks upon the credulous, but she was not so easily imposed upon.

"My daughter misses your lessons sadly, Doctor," said she, pointing to the seat at her side on the sofa; "you know you are the only one of your whole barbaric race from whom we have ever consented to accept a favor, to whom we do not fear to remain in an eternal debt of gratitude."

"Your humble servant, madam," responded the gallant doctor. "As I have frequently told you, it is I who am your debtor. Miss Raven is a pupil whom a man of my pedagogic instincts would willingly pay a high price for the privilege of instructing."

"You are pleased to jest, Doctor," answered the lady with a perceptible relaxation in the rigidity of her high-pitched voice. "You will forgive me if I approach once more our forbidden topic; but if it were not for your very marked accent, I should certainly, in spite of your own assertion to the contrary, believe you to be a Norwegian. By what freak of Providence did a man of your refinement and scholarly tastes happen to be born among this shop-keeping and office-hunting people?"

"Pardon me, madam. You know from long experience that I claim myself the privilege of abusing my countrymen; but for all that I feel bound to defend them against your reproaches. You judge of America as a blind man would judge of a painting, the description of which had been read to him from an imperfect catalogue. The grocer, Jones, and Hopkins, the county clerk, with

whom you have come in contact, are but a small and very insignificant fraction of the American people, and to judge the whole nation by two or a dozen such imperfect specimens is about as just as it would be to take the literary acquirements of old Magnus Fisherman as the educational standard among the Norwegians."

Mrs. Raven and the doctor were now fairly started upon the topic into which they invariably drifted after five minutes' conversation, in spite of their mutual agreement to the contrary. Van Flint made several appeals to Einar, in the course of the discussion, but the hostess remained rigidly irresponsive and seemed determined to ignore the presence of the unwelcome guest. The doctor had difficulty in suppressing his irritation, as he naturally regarded her impoliteness to his friend as an emphatic, though evidently unintentional, slight to himself. He therefore rose abruptly and cut the controversy short by inquiring whether Miss Raven was at home and would give him the honor of her presence.

"She was here a moment ago," declared the mother, with a touch of petulance in her voice. "That young Nordernd came and I believe you will find them both out on the back piazza."

Mrs. Raven, this dry and angular piece of humanity whose icy presence had sent a chill of discomfort through our warm-blooded hero, and who, to an indifferent eye, appeared as uninteresting a phenomenon as was ever clothed in human form, had nevertheless a pathetic chapter in her life's history, which has its claim upon the reader's sympathy. If her own word could be trusted in such a matter, she had once been very beautiful, a fact of which the extraordinary beauty of her only surviving child might be taken as inferential evidence. As a young

girl she had married a man somewhat above herself in station, and had, after the transient happiness of a brief honeymoon, meekly borne injustice and neglect, being always profoundly impressed by her own good luck in having secured a husband whose position and social accomplishments were so eminently superior to her own. Mr. Raven had been a dashing and brilliant man whose restless, full-blooded youth could but imperfectly adapt itself to the steady and measured pace of the matrimonial tread-mill. After having spent several years in the diplomatic service as *attaché* of a foreign legation, he had accepted an inferior appointment in one of the government departments, and had advanced rapidly from one position to another, when death suddenly cut short his career. It is true, he had never been a very good husband, but his wife still tenderly cherished his memory, dwelling only on his fine qualities, of which, indeed, he had many, until at length she persuaded herself that he had been the ideal of a consort, and her own life with him a stainless record of unalloyed bliss. He had been a sanguine man who always hoped for better things to come, and had found much difficulty in adapting his habits to his scanty means; and his debts had weighed heavily on his widow until, the year before her emigration, a charitable relative had taken pity on her and paid the remaining amount. Beside his debts Mr. Raven had also at his death left two children, of whom Gustav, the son, promised fair to follow in his father's footsteps. His mother had done her best to spoil him; had constantly appealed to his vanity by telling him of the admiration he excited by his handsome appearance, and had reproached Providence when in the end she reaped the fruits of her own doings.

Gustav Raven grew up a brilliant and reckless youth,

and soon acquired the unenviable reputation of being the greatest *roué* in the capital. During his various futile efforts to enter the military academy he became entangled in several disgraceful scrapes, each of which his mother readily condoned, being always firmly convinced that he had "such an excellent heart." At last, however, his relatives prevailed upon her to save the family honor by sending him to sea, which concession nearly broke her heart. But Gustav's career as a sailor was of brief duration. At the first opportunity which presented itself, he deserted, because the discipline disagreed with him, and after many adventures on sea and land he finally reached the settlement of Hardanger, where Norderud received him in his house, and, after many a hard fight, really succeeded in making something of a man of him. In Hardanger there was at that time positively no chance for dissipation, and this, in connection with Norderud's guardianship and wakeful supervision, proved Gustav Raven's salvation. The sturdy farmer, with his blunt manner and uncompromising integrity, accomplished what no amount of cajoling and soft speeches could ever have done; the young man, for the first time in his life seriously roused from his moral lethargy, made a manly effort to mend the error of his ways, and Norderud, seeing that he was in earnest, furnished the necessary capital and established him in business with his own son, Amund. The fond mother, heedless of her own future and even of that of her daughter, as soon as she received the joyful tidings, immediately embarked for America and hastened to her prodigal son in his western wilderness. Gustav's "excellent heart," in which she had always believed, had triumphed at last, and during the first year even the privations of pioneer life failed to subdue her ardor and quench the glow of

her maternal joy. But when that brief year was at an end, the great civil war broke out, and Gustav, with all those of Norderud's sons who were of man's estate, enlisted in the army; and when the rebellion was quelled, there was sorrow both in the farmer's and in the widow's house; they had both paid the price of victory by the loss of what was dearest to them. Of Norderud's three sons, two returned; but Gustav Raven never retraced his steps to the settlement of Hardanger, where he had found a harbor for his shipwrecked life. The dry goods firm in the main street, however, still remained "Raven & Norderud," and I believe, remains so till this day.

Mrs. Raven, having no means to return to Norway, now lived with her daughter in a small cottage belonging to Norderud, and managed to support her threadbare gentility by means of her son's pension and a small widow's legacy which she received from the Norwegian government. Norderud, for whom, for some reason or other, she had conceived a strong dislike, gave her the rent of the cottage, but was delicate enough to make her believe that she received it, not as a charity, but as the interest on her son's share in the dry goods business. It was very galling to Mrs. Raven that she should be in any way dependent upon a man like Norderud, who was "nothing but a peasant," and, accordingly, so infinitely inferior to herself both in rank and intelligence. And Norderud, whose native bluntness was outbalanced by an equal amount of native delicacy, had become so accustomed to humor her wishes, that he never offered to help her openly, but bestowed his gifts clandestinely through the medium of the pastor, who was a man "of gentle birth," and from whose hand it was, therefore, less humiliating to accept assistance. Of late, however, Mr. Falconberg's disagree-

ment with his principal parishioner had made matters inconveniently complicated, and had induced the latter to consider seriously whether it was not a piece of folly on his part to indulge the whims of a pretensions old lady who, in spite of her dependence upon him, persisted in treating him with proud disregard or with lofty condescension.

Such was the situation when Einar's arrival and Norderud's support of his candidacy for the organist's place, *versus* the pastor in behalf of Miss Raven, blew the smouldering hostility into full blaze. The Reverend Marcus Falconberg had that very morning called on Mrs. Raven, and, in the heat of their indignation, they had agreed that Einar was a brand of discord in the parish, and, in all probability, a dangerous character, whose presence ought not to be tolerated outside of Norderud's immediate circle. That Dr. Van Flint had taken him up was also attributed to some deep-laid scheme of Norderud's, but the pastor and Mrs. Raven were not going to be outwitted in that way, but would soon prove that they were fully his match. Mr. Falconberg, who prided himself on being a wily Ulysses, had further fortified his position in the eyes of his admiring friend, by quoting the passage from Scripture about being "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

Einar and the doctor made their exit through the front door and walked round the house to the back piazza, where Helga\* and Amund Norderud were having their *tête-à-tête*. They found Miss Raven sitting in a rocking-chair, leaning backward in an easy attitude and busy with some kind of feminine handiwork, while her companion was reclining on the steps at her feet and gazing up into her face with an air of silent, beseeching admiration. There came a

quick flash of pleasure into her eyes as she caught sight of the doctor, and she greeted him with a certain quiet cordiality, as if he knew her too well to need any demonstrative assurance of her good will.

"Miss Helga," said the doctor, seizing Einar by the arm, "this is Mr. Einar Finnson, a countryman of yours, a much-traveled Viking, who has seen many nations and become acquainted with their manners. You know that I am an unselfish man, and that whenever anything good has befallen me, it has always been my first impulse to share it with you. This is my reason for bringing you Mr. Finnson."

"No, really, Doctor," cried Einar, laughing, while he bowed and shook the hand Helga had offered him, "if we are to remain on a friendly footing, you must endeavor to restrain your poetic fancy. What place do you suppose I shall occupy in Miss Raven's estimation if, as will surely happen, I shall fail to fulfill the golden promise with which you have so recklessly saddled me? Miss Raven," he added, turning his bright face toward the young girl, "I hope you are sufficiently well acquainted with Dr. Van Flint's mental habits to know that his estimate of his friends, whether they be men of to-day or Vikings of a thousand years ago, is apt to be somewhat exaggerated."

"My dear fellow," broke in the doctor, with a pleasant laugh, "you open up a charming prospect for me as an author, if that is to be the general opinion of my capacity for moral judgment."

"You may be perfectly at your ease, Mr. Finnson," said Helga, in her rich, melodious undertone; "I know very well when to accept the doctor's verdicts and when to question them. If you were a Viking, outlawed for murder or some other interesting crime, he would be sure

to make a hero of you, and I should naturally employ what little influence I may have over him to beguile him away from your dangerous companionship ; but since you come here in the unromantic guise of a modern gentleman, I think my solicitude for my teacher's welfare need not prompt me to interfere."

Helga had unknowingly touched the unhealed wound. Einar felt the blood mounting to his face and he clenched his teeth firmly together, as if by some physical effort to stay the tide of painful memories. Was he not an outlaw whose companionship might perhaps bring disaster to those who trusted in him? But Helga was happily at that moment engaged in finding a comfortable seat for the doctor, and the doctor was equally busy in making remonstrance against her friendly exertions in his behalf. And to fill up the gap in the conversation and detract attention from himself, Einar turned abruptly to Amund Norderud, whom of course he had known since the day of his arrival in the settlement, and asked him almost fiercely concerning his mother's health. Amund was a blue-eyed and raw-boned young giant of about thirty, with large good-natured features, broad brow and an abundant pate of light-brown hair. His clothes had somehow a meretricious look of having been bought ready-made, and gathering in ample folds over his shoulders, and indeed everywhere, utterly refused to adapt themselves to the angularities of his body. He had been an ardent admirer of Helga, since the time she was a school-girl, and had followed her about with the unreflecting devotion of an ill-favored dog who accepts kicks and caresses from his mistress with the same patient equanimity. As the partner and faithful friend of her deceased son, Mrs. Raven was inclined to regard him as less objectionable



than the other members of his plebeian family,—perhaps with the exception of the daughter Ingrid, whose girlish affection for Helga claimed some recognition on her part.

Now Amund was sitting on the steps of the piazza and listening, not without a vague sense of jealousy (for even dumb animals are not exempt from this troublesome emotion), to Helga's animated conversation with the doctor and the Norwegian visitor. She made an occasional appeal to him, evidently prompted by pity, in order not to leave him altogether out in the cold, and he answered in his own awkward fashion, but still failed to catch the drift of the disension. It was already growing dark, but the red glow along the horizon's rim was like a faint echo by which the retiring day still made its presence remotely felt; it had only gone to rest for a brief hour, while its warm gaze was yet watching them from over the ridge of the western hills. The superb contour of Helga's head with its rippling abundance of golden hair and the beauty of her figure were still visible in the dusk, and the mellow cadence of her voice fell upon Amund's ear like a siren's song against which he had for many a year been endeavoring to close the ears of his soul, but always with the same miserable result.

"How I envy you men," he heard Helga saying, "the faculty to compel your lives to shape themselves in accordance with some ruling idea. To a woman everything is destiny; she can do little or nothing toward fashioning her own fate, and if she has anything worth living for, a hundred obstinate circumstances invariably combine to frustrate her endeavors."

Einar, who was then more sensitive than usually, detected in this remark a covert allusion to her late defeat

in the musical contest, although that event was at the moment very far from Helga's mind. The charitable darkness hid his excitement, and he answered with as much composure as he could summon :

"If I am a fair representative of my sex (which I hardly claim to be) and if I dare judge from my own experience, I should say that fate is as inexorable a fact in a man's life as in that of a woman. A man may act from the most generous motives, and still find himself placed in situations where he has only the choice between two mean and ungenerous deeds. Circumstances, in the making of which he has himself no hand, wind day by day their dense net-work about him and, before he knows it, his alternative is no longer between good and bad but only between the greater and the lesser evil."

Einar had a distinct case in his mind as he spoke, and the last sentences were hurried from his lips with a good deal of impetuous feeling. There was a pause before any one undertook to reply; the doctor leaned forward and rested his chin meditatively on the head of his cane and Amund observed that the mosquitoes were getting very troublesome. At last, Helga's voice, which seemed to have gathered force from the silence, came clear and soft out of the darkness :

"The man who could find himself in the situation you have described, Mr. Finnson, would hardly be a man after my heart. I confess that I have sometimes wished that I were myself a man, because here in Hardanger a woman is nothing but a needed appendage to a man's life. And I should like so much to be something by myself, not merely in my own estimation, but also in the estimation of those among whom I have to live. There, for instance, is the doctor, who loves your old Norse history and litera-

ture and who has chosen for himself the glorious task of enlightening the world on a subject of which the world knows next to nothing. It is such a life I should like to live, but as I cannot do it as a woman, I have wished that I were something else."

The implied reproach in her words touched Einar to the quick and their *naïve* straightforwardness moved him deeply.

"It is very fortunate, Miss Helga," said Van Flint with his quiet chuckle, "that I have a sufficiently poor opinion of myself to counterbalance your immoderate praise. To have a handsome young lady like yourself avow such exalted notions about one's pursuits might well turn the head of even a less conceited fellow than myself and bring all his latent vanity to the surface."

"Ah, Doctor," retorted the girl, shaking her head, "I shall not question your sincerity, but I dare say that if I possessed your accomplishments I should be less modest than you are."

It must be admitted that it is never very agreeable to be made aware of one's own deficiencies, even if the gainer by the implied comparison is one's bosom friend; and Einar, whose feelings during the whole of this interview had been moving on in a steady *crescendo*, had by this time reached a most painful *fortissimo*. He rose abruptly, and, with the impetuosity peculiar to generous and full-blooded youth, made his way through the open window into the back parlor where he found Mrs. Raven engaged in knitting by the light of a green-shaded kerosene lamp. She looked up, frowning as she saw him advancing toward her, then bent again with increased assiduity over her knitting.

"I come," began Einar, with the excitement still quiv-

ering in his voice, "to ask your forgiveness because I have unknowingly caused you disappointment by gaining, in a worthless contest, a position which justly belonged to your daughter. If you would allow me to resign it at once in her favor, you would make me very happy. I know that this offer must appear extraordinary to you, coming, as it does, from one who is a stranger to you, but if you could see my motives, you would find it in no way humiliating to yield to my wish."

Mrs. Raven showed her wrinkled face once more against the lamp-light, frowned with less severity than before but remained silent. There was something very engaging in the young man's manner; moreover, his appearance had that indefinable air of distinction which never failed of its effect upon her aristocratic heart, and the ardor of his speech imparted to him a certain reckless grace which recalled vividly to her mind her own lamented son.

"Mr. Finnsen," she said at last, while the suddenly awakened memory softened the sternness of her voice, "do you not understand that my position, as the widow of a royal Norwegian official, prevents me from accepting a favor from a stranger like yourself, of whom nothing is known here, except that he is the protégé of a man of whom the less said, the better."

Einar, although by no means discouraged, was for the moment quite staggered by this singular allusion to Norderud. Could it be possible that his fair name had been stained and that his hospitality to new-comers was only a shrewd device for gaining adherents? Never! The very face of the man made such a suspicion appear preposterous.

"Well," resumed the old lady, with a half-feigned impatience, for the handsome young face of her visitor had

by this time quite conquered her ill-will. "Is there anything more?"

"Only this, with your permission. I can very well see the force of your objections. But I cannot consent to leave you without having obtained your promise that you will at some future time, when even the appearance of conferring or accepting a favor must have vanished, allow me to retire in favor of one who deserves my present position so much better than I do."

"Never mind the position, sir," retorted Mrs. Raven, this time failing utterly in her attempt to be severe. "But if you wish to come here and discuss with an old lady like me anything else you may choose to talk about, I shall not shut my door in your face."

With this not over cordial invitation to return, our Norseman withdrew and once more joined the group on the piazza. He had now eased his heart, and in the warm after-glow of the excitement talked with a beautiful naturalness and animation which gradually roused Helga from the apathetic attitude she had at the outset assumed toward him. When, an hour later, she entered the parlor where her mother was still engaged with her knitting, she was, however, no nearer to a definite judgment concerning her visitor than when he first arrived. And Helga's mind inclined strongly toward decisive judgments; her proud and impetuous nature found rest only in extremes and was never satisfied with the golden mean. She liked men of positive character and had even more patience with large vices than with pusillanimous mediocrity. Einar appeared to her a very complex phenomenon,—a smooth, well-bred and agreeable man, but without any very positive coloring. And still there was an air of sincerity about him and a refinement of speech and

manner which at once commanded her attention and made her originally indifferent attitude toward him as difficult to maintain as one of positive dislike. It was, therefore, with a hesitation quite unusual with her that she answered her mother's question, how her new acquaintance had impressed her.

"He seems to be so terribly well-bred," she said, "that I hardly know what to make of him. I wonder how the doctor could become so intimate with him. They are so very unlike. I only know that I shall never like Mr. Finnsen as well as I like the doctor. These social graces, I think, are often the mere covering of moral weakness, and I could never admire a weak man."

"Ah, don't be too sure of that, my dear," said Mrs. Raven, and nodded knowingly.

"A deuced fine woman," remarked the doctor, when, after a long silence, he slammed his garden gate behind him with a good deal of needless energy. In this rudely expressive phrase it was his wont to vent all the conflicting emotions with which Helga inspired him, whenever a fresh visit had roused them from their well-guarded slumber. Einar heartily coincided in this opinion, but for some reason or other he found it unwise, just then, to say so. He was in so exalted a mood that words seemed superfluous, if not a profanation. In his holy of holies, a man preserves a sacred silence.

## CHAPTER VII.

### “THE HARDANGER CITIZEN.”

ONE day early in the month of December, about five months after Einar Finnsen's arrival in Hardanger, there was a meeting of some twelve or more gentlemen, all solid capitalists and land-owners, in Norderud's front parlor. The meeting was but a semi-official one, but for the sake of preserving a parliamentary appearance, the host had, by common consent, taken the chair, and was jotting down on a piece of paper (and with a blissful disregard of English orthography) some memoranda, while his neighbor, Nichols, with his hands on his back and his eyes steadily fixed on the floor, was combating the opinions expressed by the last honored speaker. Farmer Nichols, although he had always sustained the most amicable relations to the Norderuds personally, had a notion that the essential object of parliamentary gatherings was universal dissent, and, adhering to this principle, he had persistently opposed everybody who had spoken and everything which had been proposed since the beginning of the present meeting.

“I don't see,” he said, “that a paper of the sort the gentleman thar” (with a sideward inclination of the head toward the chair) “has proposed is going to help the farmers' interests in this here county. I have always taken the ‘Weekly Tribune’ (pronounced Trybune) my-

self iver since we have had a post-office in the village, and my wife reads the agricult'ral stuff thar ivery blessed week, and she kept a-botherin' me until I had to buy a subsoil plow and a sort of new-fashioned reaper. But I niver saw that it made much difference with the potato-bugs and the frost whether you plowed one way or another, and as I have said to the gentleman thar, I don't take much stock in newspapers."

The speaker here produced a brass tobacco-box from the depth of his trousers pocket, spat with deliberate aim at the stove, and resumed his seat. Norderud, probably ignorant of the restrictions which parliamentary tradition imposes upon presiding officers, now rose for the fifth or sixth time to refute his neighbor's argument against newspapers. He spoke in his usual calm, unpretentious manner, and in tolerably correct English, although with a perceptibly foreign accent and with an occasional violation of syntactic rules.

"It was never my intention," he began, "to have nothing in the paper except agriculture. There are other ways of helping the farmer than by telling him how to sow and how to reap his crops. The world, you know, is a pretty big affair, and a great many things are going on which it is well for a man to know, and here in our own State and in our own county, there are some things happening which we, here in Hardanger, ought to have something to say about. There are the county and the State elections, not to speak of our own village affairs, which are now governed entirely by the caucuses, in which we Norwegians have hardly a voice. And still we are pretty nearly a majority in the county. This, I daresay, is not as it ought to be; and what I propose to do is to establish a paper, which shall speak out boldly for the interests of



our village, not only for the interests of the Norwegians but for all right-minded citizens, who want good republican government."

There was nothing very profound in these remarks of Mr. Norderud's, but upon those members of the assembly who claimed Viking descent they made a deep impression. Three or four of them who had been sitting in stooping attitudes, with their right hand up to the corresponding ear, now rose with characteristic Norse deliberateness and simultaneously demanded the floor. The chair, after some hesitation, accorded the right of speech to Nils Nyhus, an old settler in Hardanger, who, by dint of industry and native shrewdness, had gained what, for a Norwegian, seemed a very respectable fortune. But Nils Nyhus was a stanch conservative, who had an in-born repugnance to ostentatious change either in dress or in politics. His present republicanism was of a decidedly Norse-royalistic complexion, and his clothes still retained an indefinitely Norse cut and an all-pervading odor of the stable.

"Nils Norderud," said Nyhus, scratching himself meditatively behind his ear, and grinning with a kind of apologetic mien, half-way between a smile and a frown, "excuse me, Mr. Chairman. I meant no harm, nohow. But if you are going to talk politics, then don't you think that you can shnt me out, because it aint no use to try, I tell ye." Nyhus here raised his voice into a fiercely combative pitch and shook his fist with slow emphasis at Norderud, as if implying that the latter had been harboring the darkest schemes for shutting him out from the exercise of his political rights. "No, sir," he went on, visibly emboldened by the success of his stratagem; you had better not try it. For if ye are going to

talk politics, I mean to have my say about it, and that in spite of all of ye, too. Now, there is the bridge acrost the creek that runs by my farm, and there is a big hole in it, big enough to put your head comfortably through it. Now, I should like to know what sort er gover'ment that is that ye have in 'Vashington,' if it lets things run on like that right under its nose. There is my big sorrel, him as you called Lincol', Nils Norderud, though I thought Socks was jest as good a name for him, he broke his leg clean off on that d——d bridge, so I had to shoot him the next day, and he bled all night like a bull, and no turpentine would stop it, and no bandaging neither."

Here a few of the members present began to show signs of impatience, and Norderud, with a good-natured shake of his head at Nyhus, motioned to him to resume his seat. But Nyhus was one of those unhappy individuals whose eloquence is rather of an unmanageable kind, and like all ponderous bodies, experiences an equal difficulty in getting started and in arresting its course, when once fairly under way. He had long borne a serious grudge against our grand republic, as a whole, and against the Johnsonian administration in particular, for the loss of his valuable sorrel, and this seemed to him as favorable an opportunity, as any he was likely to find, for giving vent to his just wrath.

"No, Nils Norderud," he continued, in a still higher pitch and waving his hand in appeal to the company, "you shan't try to take the word out of my mouth,—that you shan't try. I ask these gentlemen here if it is a fair thing for you to take the word out of my mouth. No, sir, it aint. And as I was a-sayin', I have paid my taxes regular every year since I built my house and broke up my clearing, and if I have done right by the gover'ment,

the gover'ment should do right by me too. I should like to ask these gentlemen here if that aint good Christianity? And as for my sorrel, him as you called Lincol'—"

"The devil take your sorrel, whom I called Lincoln," broke in the chair, in a voice of mingled amusement and despair; "one might almost think you were as big a blockhead as ever lived, Nils, by the way you talk, and not a shrewd and well-informed man, as you really are. Don't you understand that we have come here not to talk what you call politics, but to agree upon some plan for establishing a republican newspaper?"

"Yes, Nils Norderud," resumed the indefatigable Nyhus, who had been standing with his mouth open, ready to avail himself of the first pause, "I understand that quite well, and that was what I was just now a-comin' to. If you can get up a better gover'ment with your paper, that will look after roads and bridges, then I am ready to pay down six hundred dollars for it, and whenever you want the money, you can call on me, and you shall have every cent of it, as sure as my name is Nils Anderson Nyhus."

The irrepressible speaker having "said his say" and explained his patriarchal theory of government, now willingly yielded the floor to Norderud's oldest son, a blonde, large-featured and broad-shouldered man, and a good representative of the pervading family type. He spoke in a low, modest voice, as if he did not think what he said of much account, and glanced up now and then, blushing with a timidity quite out of keeping with his athletic frame; he offered some suggestions very much to the point regarding the nature of the proposed paper, and ended with declaring his readiness to contribute eight hundred or, perhaps, a thousand dollars. Thorarin Nor-

derud, the second son, then broke the silence, and with the proud, approving eyes of his father resting on him, delivered a little speech on the expediency of forming a stock company on the spot, and offered to take the same number of shares as his brother should take.

At this point of the proceedings Mrs. Norderud, matronly, mild and radiant as ever, with quiet, unobtrusive happiness, made her appearance in the door, followed by Ingrid, with her long, yellow braids down her back. The mother carried in her hands a large tray, upon which stood little pyramids of coffee-cups and a shining copper kettle, and the daughter supported a smaller burden of sugar-bowls and cream-pitchers. The chair could not suppress a frown at this unparliamentary interruption, not because he objected to the coffee, which was excellent, but because he was, perhaps, secretly ashamed of this kind of Old-World hospitality in the presence of his American neighbors, who would, no doubt, think it very unrepublican. Norderud, you are aware, had just now reached that stage in the process of his Americanization when he began to suspect that his Norse national habits were perhaps a little bit primitive, and that it would do no harm quietly to suppress them, even if this necessity should involve a small sacrifice of comfort. He, therefore, turned with a clouded brow to his wife, and, addressing her in her native tongue, said: "Isn't this rather a superfluous thing, Karen? These gentlemen, you know, have only come to see me on business." And the wife, with genuine Norwegian simplicity, responded: "Why, Nils, it certainly would be a shame if we were to refuse wayfaring men a cup of coffee and something to bite in. I never heard you say such an unreasonable thing before."

This colloquy took place in an undertone, at the presi-



**"THE CHAIR COULD NOT SUPPRESS A FROWN AT THIS UNPAR-  
LIAMENTARY INTERRUPTION."**



dential table, and at a sufficient distance from the guests to prevent their hearing anything not intended for their ears. Norderud wound up his remonstrance with a surrendering grunt, and Ingrid distributed napkins and cleared the papers off the table. The hostess now found time to shake hands with her two large sons, to inquire for their wives, and to scold them gently for not having brought them with them; and the sons, in their turn, rehearsed their oft-repeated apologies for their oft-repeated negligence. Knut, the oldest, explained that Birgit, his wife, had just set up a new loom, which absorbed all her spare moments, and Thorarin's youngest baby had had an attack of croup, which, with God's help, would not prove very dangerous, but which was still sufficient to drive all thoughts of visiting out of the mother's head. If, he ventured to suggest, Ingrid would go home with him and stay with his Elsie for a couple of weeks, he certainly would regard it as a great favor. But, he added, with a side glance at his sister's fair face and neat toilet, Ingrid was getting to look so much like a fine lady, that he was almost ashamed to ask her to put up with the country fare and country manners which he must offer her out at Lumber Creek. The young girl, who since the first time we met her had made a greater advance toward womanhood than the brief time seemed to warrant, was immediately summoned, and with some little embarrassment and hesitation, declared that she was now so well started in her French and German studies with Mr. Finnson, that it would be very inconvenient for her to break off just then, and that she would at least wait until the holidays were over. From the gentle and indulgent Ingrid, to whom a visit to Lumber Creek and her brother's babies had hitherto appeared one of the most desirable

things in the world, a refusal to so friendly a proposition had hardly been anticipated, and for a moment caused mother and son to exchange wondering glances; and Ingrid, a little frightened at her own boldness, tried ineffectually to hide her blushes by an increased activity at the coffee-table.

The gentleman, in the meanwhile, relaxed from the unwonted restraints of parliamentary discipline, discussed with informal ease the journalistic problem over their fragrant coffee cups. Mrs. Norderud, whose coffee, according to the universal verdict, possessed a virtue of its own, had unconsciously smoothed the way for her husband's ambitious projects, and the animating brown fluid, enriched by the sweet yellow cream, imperceptibly mellowed the combative temperaments and stimulated the latent generosity of the indolent. Farmer Nichols was no longer confident that newspapers were one of the devil's chief agencies for the demoralization of mankind and Nils Nyhus was even ready to admit that, if they had had a good journal in the county at an earlier period, his lamented sorrel might not have come to such an untimely end. Presently a paper, which the prudent Norderud had drawn up, began to pass from hand to hand; a couple of pens, already dipped, were fumbled and minutely examined by stiff and deliberate fingers, and one autograph, of characteristic angularities, was pensively added to another, until at last the stock company was duly formed, and the required number of shares subscribed. When the main business of the day was finished and the afternoon already far advanced, Mrs. Norderud (this time without any remonstrance from her husband) took the liberty to invite the stockholders to a frugal supper, at which everybody took pains to display the brilliant and amiable sides



of his nature, and where accordingly a Babylonian confusion of Norse and American mirth prevailed. Thus "The Hardanger Citizen" was launched upon the world under auspices which even a pessimist would have pronounced favorable.

During the following weeks Nyhus, Nichols and other reluctant sponsors of "The Citizen" gradually worked themselves up to a fever heat of enthusiasm quite unusual with men of their slow and conservative habits. The former especially displayed the most laudable zeal and almost dogged Norderud's footsteps, persecuting him with wild suggestions regarding the future management of "The Citizen." He had even a vague notion that he had himself fathered this magnificent journalistic project, and persisted in sharing with his neighbor the honor of representing it before the public. Meetings and conferences were held almost daily, except on the great holidays, and the size, type and political color of the paper were thoroughly discussed. In point of fact, it was Norderud who, single-handed, managed the whole affair, but, shrewd and clear-headed as he was, he cared more for the reality of power than its appearance and consequently allowed his associates unlimited freedom of discussion. He had taken his stand firmly from the beginning that the paper should be written in English with the exception of the weekly leader and the column of Scandinavian news, which were to appear both in English and in Norwegian versions. He was far-sighted enough to see that as long as his countrymen remained a separate and exclusive caste in the State, they never could exert the political power to which their numerical strength and their intelligence entitled them, and he hoped by this little device gradually to familiarize them with the English language and thus break up the

clannishness which they had inherited along with their blonde hair, their blue eyes and their stubborn self-dependence. It caused something of a sensation, although less opposition than might have been expected, when in a meeting of the board he proposed to offer the editorship to Doctor Van Flint with Mr. Einar Finnson as chief assistant. It was, however, a serious disappointment to Norderud, when the popular doctor persisted in reversing this order and assuming himself merely an unsalaried position as adviser and general superintendent, with Finnson as managing editor. But as every one was aware that the doctor's services were absolutely indispensable, if the paper was to be a success, there was no alternative but to accept his proposition. Einar was of course ignorant of the concatenation of circumstances which led to his own appointment, and, after having silenced by his friend's help his conscientious scruples in regard to youth, inexperience, etc., he cheerfully accepted.

During the last months Einar had led rather a scholarly existence, and the doctor's genial example had begun to exert a soothing influence over his restless self. Van Flint's daily life was full of quietly absorbing events, such as the discovery of a new authority, corroborative of an old favorite theory, or the detection of an unpardonable error in an author whose judgment on Icelandic subjects had hitherto been accepted as unimpeachable, or, what was the most exciting of all, the recognition of some Northern myth that had strayed away from its home and domesticated itself in some foreign literature. When discoveries of this kind had for the moment disturbed his mental equilibrium, the doctor would call out to Einar, who would perhaps be giving a French or German lesson in the next room, and during the rest of the day he would

walk up and down the floor rubbing his hands and throwing about him absent-minded glances of radiant contentment. Einar, who had at first looked upon these spasmodic outbursts of feeling as one of his friend's amiable eccentricities, was now himself infected by the scholarly contagion and could discourse as excitedly on a misinterpreted Saga text and laugh over the mistakes of a journal of high repute with as much zest as the learned doctor himself. It was singular to notice with what fierceness Van Flint, who was in all other things even tender-hearted enough to approach Cowper's ideal of a friend (for he certainly would not "needlessly set foot upon a worm"), could attack a fellow-savant whose verdict regarding Snorre's\* chronology or the Norse discovery of America differed from his own. The abstraction of a million dollars from the State treasury or the robbery of a national bank was to him a venial offense compared to the enormity of such a crime as, for instance, questioning the Saga record of the Norse cruises to Vineland.

Since Einar began to regale the ear of rural Hardanger with his fantastic interludes and impromptus, the doctor had been very regular in his attendance upon the preaching of the Rev. Marcus Falconberg; and the Rev. Mr. Falconberg, who was far from suspecting the cause of his sudden religious zeal, was already beginning to flatter himself with the prospect of gaining a pecuniarily valuable soul for the pure and undiluted Evangelical faith. The doctor, however, met all the pastor's innuendoes on this matter with vaguely conciliatory smiles or with evasive discourses on the historical aspect of the period of the Reformation, and learned criticism of Lu-

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\* Snorre Sturlason, the author of the Icelandic *Heimskringla*.

ther, Melancthon and his fellow reformers, for whose iconoclastic zeal he confessed he could summon very little sympathy; but the pastor, whose native combativeness had been strongly developed during his American sojourn, was nothing daunted by these attacks and frequently pursued his prospective convert even beyond the church to his own garden gate. Of Einar, who invariably accompanied them on these promenades, he took very little notice, only greeting him with a careless nod and perhaps asking him how he was getting on with his pupils.

The journalistic excitement which during the Christmas week had taken a vigorous hold on the popular imagination of Hardanger could naturally not leave the pastor unaffected. Norderud had, without consulting Mr. Falconberg, had a notice posted on all the street corners in which he defined the political platform of "The Citizen" and further announced that "all the news was to be had for two dollars," and that the best intellectual forces in the State had been secured for the new enterprise. In return for this merely nominal sum the public were to be treated to "a display of wit, wisdom and erudition hitherto unexampled in the history of journalism." It was a chance that came only "once in a century," and it was the obvious duty of every sane and patriotic man who had an eye to his own interest and that of his country to avail himself of this generous offer and at once send in his subscription to "The Hardanger Citizen," P. O. Box 12. This flaming announcement caught the pastor's eye one morning in the holiday week as he strode along the dilapidated sidewalks on his way to church; he stopped and read it carefully through to the end, then took out his note-book and made some memoranda. The thought that all this political scheming had been going on in his own

congregation without his knowledge drove the blood to his head and hastened his footsteps; and when, at the hour of worship, he mounted the pulpit he startled his parishioners first by making a mistake in the Lord's Prayer, and secondly by an impetuous tirade against political schemers, who forget the Lord's kingdom and its righteousness, who vainly try to smother the ill odor of their inward rottenness by a display of external magnificence, whose voices are like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and who, having enjoyed all the good things of this life, are hereafter to be consigned to that place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. And to make his allusions still more pointed, the preacher brought in quite aptly some quotations from the platform of "The Citizen," to show to what depths of depravity human nature could sink and to what lengths political lying could be carried.

Norderud, in the meanwhile, sitting with his wife and daughter in his front pew, listened with great composure to the heated eloquence of his pastor, and never stirred or winced under the wrathful glances which now and then were flung at him from the elevated pulpit. When the sermon was finished and the inevitable chorus of nose-blowing, hawking and coughing announced that the minister was descending from his sacerdotal throne, he joined in that unmelodious performance with the zest of long habit, and afterward lent his voice to the exaltation of God, when the strong organ tone gathered under its shield of melody the unmusical outpourings of four or five hundred rustic throats. Norderud, like many another sturdy Philistine, although quite destitute of voice in the musical sense, still labored under the delusion that he could sing, and could never refrain from chiming in with

a hearty discord, whenever he heard anything resembling sacred or profane song. I doubt if even Nilsson or Patti could have daunted him or quelled his musical ardor. Now he chanted the old-fashioned hymns with a sturdy disregard of time and key, but with an earnestness which no doubt, in the eyes of his Maker, compensated for his failings in point of melodiousness. The Rev. Marcus Falconberg, however, did not take pains to penetrate to the laudable emotions which prompted the deed, and to his ears Norderud's stubborn discords had a peculiarly defiant and irreligious ring which disturbed his own devotions and was at variance with the sanctity of the worship. And to increase the pastor's grievances, this same irrepressible parishioner had retained the Norwegian custom of reading the gospel and the epistle half aloud with the minister, which, to the latter, had very much the appearance of an attempt to correct and control him.

It gave the pastor a most irritating sense of his own powerlessness, that Norderud, even on a day like this, when he had administered so pointed a rebuke to him, could calmly persist in all his unpleasant habits, and not even by an uneasy glance or motion betray that the blow had taken effect. As the worship came to a close, Mr. Falconberg was firmly resolved to address a note to the culprit, demanding in authoritative language, as became a clergyman, that he should at once desist from his political intrigues or sever his connection with the congregation. But unfortunately he knew the independent spirit of his parishioner too well to suppose that such a move would frighten him, and after having ruminated over his dinner on the worldly and pecuniary aspect of the case, he concluded that it was his duty, for the sake of his church, to

remain passive, until he could muster a force of opposition strong enough to defeat the enemy.

Among those who had listened with a feeling of mingled surprise and displeasure to the pastor's arraignment of Nordernd was Helga Raven. Her keen ear had at once detected a little shrill note of personal spite, amid the sonorous blasts of denunciation, and she could not suppress the thought that he had stooped below the dignity of his office when he made it subservient to his own paltry concerns. To her, the minister before the altar or in the pulpit was quite a different being from the minister in private life. When he preached or performed the sacred offices of the church, he stood before her in exalted abstraction, and was raised high above the possibility of criticism. Whether he had a squeaky or a full-sounding voice, whether he was eloquent or not, whether he took snuff, etc., were matters which her native womanly reverence forbade her to inquire into. She was not American enough as yet, you see, to look upon the church as an institution which stood in need of her patronage and support, and the minister as a prosy or interesting fellow-mortal, toward whose salary she paid her share, and whom she had, therefore, the privilege to censure and to inflict herself upon, at pleasure.

As Helga followed the crowd down the aisle and with the heedlessness of one conscious of a strong emotion, pushed her way toward the door, she found the front vestibule thronged with Sunday-clad farmers who, with the deliberate gestures and the slowly kindling excitement peculiar to Norsemen, were discussing what all felt to be the great event of the day. Outside, the snow was falling noiselessly in large, white flakes, and softened with its billowy curves the naked anger of the leafless

trees. The snow-sparrows were having a chirping little squabble up in the branches of the maple outside the church-door, and shook the crisp snow in a drizzling spray down upon the bonnets of the departing women. Helga, quite forgetful of the new white plume upon her own hat, gathered up her skirts daintily and was about to launch out into the snow when two umbrellas were simultaneously lifted above her head from two opposite sides. She looked up and nodded with indiscriminating friendliness to Einar and Amund Norderud, who seemed each equally unwilling to yield to the other the privilege of protecting her against the storm.

"I think my umbrella has the right of priority," said Einar, with that well-bred assumption of protectorship which seldom fails to impress a woman. "I think, Mr. Norderud, that you will have to recognize my claim."

"No," replied Amund, with his usual blunt directness, "I am pretty sure that my umbrella was ahead of yours. But I do not mean to force my company upon Helga, if she does not want me. She will have to decide between us."

Helga remained standing on the steps, and looked with a half-dazed expression from one to the other, as if she did not quite comprehend what she was to decide. After the strong agitation she had experienced, this petty altercation seemed so insignificant that she had difficulty in bringing her mind down to it. A second glance at Amund's face showed her that he too was laboring under a dumb excitement, and that he must have felt deeply the injustice of the pastor's attack upon his father. And with that instinctive leaning toward martyrdom which is an inborn trait of womanhood, her heart went forward with a sudden tenderness toward her uncouth and hitherto unfavored adorer.



"I can make no choice, Mr. Finnson," said she, as she took Amund's arm, "but Amund is nearest to my right arm, and I will allow chance to decide."

A swift flash of color sprang to Einar's cheeks, and as he stood pondering on his humiliation, his pride rose in self-defense, and he made an impotent effort to despise both Helga for her choice and Amund for his undeserved good fortune.

Since that day the pastor's influence over Helga, which had once been great, was irretrievably lost. She felt as if he had inflicted a personal hurt upon her, a great injury which could never be healed. But, such is the strange complexity of human affairs, the very event which dethroned the arrogant pastor, raised the humble Amund into the sudden sunshine of her favor.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INGRID.

THE document which had aroused so much indignation among the pastor's adherents in Hardanger was, if the truth must be told, not Norderud's own composition. He had even persistently opposed it, until Mr. Bingham, a clever young man from Maine, who had no objection to becoming United States Senator, had touched his tender spot in accusing him of Old-World sleepiness and ignorance of the American way of doing business. Mr. Bingham was one of those gentlemen who was vaguely known as an agent, being ever ready to negotiate a sale for anything under the sun, from real estate and insurance policies to subscription books and patent boot-blackening. He was understood to have followed the star of empire on its westward way, because he firmly believed in the future of his country, and was, moreover, convinced that those benighted western immigrants whose voting power made them still more worthy of pity needed a guide and counselor of his own caliber. He was usually referred to in the corner groceries as "darned smart," and those disaffected political critics who sit on boxes in front of grog-shops and indulge with equal languidness in profanity and bad cigars, were frequently heard to prophesy the most brilliant future for him. If there were political bones "lying around loose," he would be sure before long

to have his finger on them. "The Citizen," when it was once well started, and with proper management, Mr. Bingham did not fail to see, would be a powerful agency for the accomplishment of his own ends, and he at length succeeded in persuading Norderud to sell him two of his own shares, giving him his note for the amount.

It was, as already intimated, this brilliant young gentleman who had supplied the high-sounding phraseology of the advertisement, and Norderud, whose habitual taciturnity could ill brook the other's deluge of words, had at last submitted with an impatient growl.

It was the third day of January, and the first number of the paper had just appeared. Einar sat at his editorial table in his well-furnished office in the Norderud block, contemplating with affectionate interest the still damp sheet of "The Hardanger Citizen," which lay spread out before him. He had never before aspired to authorial honors, and to see his thoughts which he had hitherto scattered broadcast, heedless of their value, thus immortalized, filled his breast with proud contentment. The language, he thought, was remarkably well sounding, and one stately phrase came marching along after another with a majestic tread and a fine Ciceronian roll. He read his leader aloud with oratorical flourishes of his hands and dwelling with impressive emphasis upon r's and l's, as if he stood in the presence of an admiring audience. The sentiments, he was then quite inclined to forget, were more than half Norderud's and the doctor's, but their outward garb had undeniably been furnished by the editor. The clippings were judicious, the typographical errors reduced to a minimum, the page neither too much spread out nor too crowded, and even the advertisements were arranged with an eye to symmetry and beauty.

Einar had never been more agreeably conscious of his own importance; he had suddenly, and for the first time in his life, got a valuable stake in existence. He was sure "The Citizen" would draw the eyes of the nation upon it; that it would, in time, be within its own unmetropolitan sphere a model newspaper, and, perhaps, raise its editor to dignity and power. But at this moment some sudden memory disturbed the serenity of his countenance, and he arose and began to march excitedly up and down the floor. With an unwonted vehemence he ran his hand through his hair, and a vivid pain distorted his handsome features. Now, here was the prospect of beginning a clean life, unsullied even by the memory of hidden evil. Alas! but if he had the courage to tear the veil of concealment from his own past, would not that life of purity and usefulness of which he dreamed pitilessly close before him, leaving him standing on the threshold, forever knocking and forever turned away? He flung himself once more into his chair, leaning over the desk and resting his forehead on the palms of both hands; and thus he sat, he knew not how long, dimly wrestling with fitful and impetuous thoughts,—thoughts strong enough to cause an agony of pain and still too weak to lift him above mere contemplation into a decisive deed. Then there was a gentle tap on the door, and some one was heard entering. Einar turned quickly around, only too happy to have some external impression push the dismal struggle into the background of his mind.

"Ah," he exclaimed, with friendly eagerness, seeing that his visitor was Ingrid Norderud, "how kind of you, Miss Ingrid, to come and visit me in my editorial solitude!"

"Mr. Finnson" said Ingrid, with a little quivering of her lips,—for she had evidently something serious on her

mind,—“I only wanted to ask you—but you must excuse my boldness—I only didn’t know——”

Ingrid had plunged boldly into her subject, but she now found that she had not strength enough to sustain her. Her lips again trembled and she laid hold of the door-knob, and stood, with her face half averted, glancing timidly at Einar with eyes of moist brightness. The school-books which she held in her arm fell upon the floor and she stooped down to pick them up, but he with precipitous politeness had anticipated her, and thus it happened that she bumped her forehead gently against his, and found a welcome excuse for giving vent to her long-restrained tears.

“But my dear Miss Ingrid,” cried he, in a tone of sincere regret, “a thousand times I beg your pardon. I am very sorry if I have hurt you. Come and sit down and let me see if I can do anything for you.”

And only remembering for the moment that she was weeping, and that he was the cause, he yielded to the overwhelming tenderness which rose within him, laid his arm gently, almost reverently, about her waist and led her to a seat ; and she submitted unreflectingly as a weak creature submits to the guidance of a stronger will, feeling all the while a timid happiness under his caressing touch.

To him she was, with her short dress, her long yellow braids and the baby-like roundness of her features, only a sweet child and his own pupil, who had sought his aid in some childish and, as he imagined, casily soothed affliction.

“And has anybody been unkind to you, little Ingrid ?” asked he, leaning over toward her and gazing into her blushing face while her convulsive sobs were gradually subsiding.

“Yes,” answered the girl, catching for breath and dry-

ing her tears with her handkerchief. "You promised that you would teach me, and now you don't do it any more. We haven't seen you for a whole week, and I have studied the lesson you gave me, about the subjunctive mood, and written the exercises, but you never came to look at them."

"But, my dear girl," said he, still in the soothing tone in which one speaks to an aggrieved child, "how could I teach you when I have had the paper to attend to and have scarcely had a single moment to myself? Your father would hardly like it, if I were to neglect the paper. Now you must be a reasonable little girl and not demand of me what you know I cannot do."

Ingrid looked up appealingly and again the tears gathered in the innocent blue eyes. It required more than human strength to resist their silent entreaty; and Einar was intensely human in this moment, and had, moreover, that peculiarly masculine weakness to be constitutionally powerless against a woman's tears. Still, although knowing that he should in the end surrender, he felt that he ought to persist in his tender remonstrance. It gave him such an agreeable sense of his own strength, not to say superiority, to be thus pleading with a fair young girl against her own irrational weakness.

"You will certainly understand," he went on, "that I cannot be in two places at once, and as long as I have no assistant and have to keep the office open all day, I cannot attend to my pupils. And, yesterday, I sent around notices to all of them except you, because I expected to see you personally before long. Don't you think that is quite reasonable?"

"Yes; but I don't see why you couldn't go on and give me a lesson now and then," responded Ingrid, with tear-

ful pertinacity. And she met his eyes with a sweet little resolute pout, as if she thought she had presented an irrefutable argument. Einar drank in the sight of the fair face and his heart went out with an irresistible force toward this young, inexperienced girl who valued his poor instruction so far beyond its actual merits. All the masculine fibers of his nature were deeply stirred, and it seemed impossible not to stoop down and kiss those pure, delicately curved lips which were still turned up toward him with their child-like pout, tempting him beyond endurance. But he violently roused himself, and with the same winning smile which had unconsciously beguiled Ingrid's unfortified heart into a willing surrender, he seized her hand and said:

"Well, Miss Ingrid, since you think so much of my poor teaching, I will try if I can't find an evening once or twice a week to devote to you."

The girl's face brightened as if a sudden breeze had blown away the traces of her recent sorrow.

"Thank you, thank you," she cried, pressing his hand with frank cordiality. "I am ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Finnson. And my father will be so very glad, too; for, when I asked him he said that he could not dispose of your time, but I should have to ask you and you would know best what to do."

This visit of Ingrid to the office of "The Hardanger Citizen" was no hasty whim, but the result of a long chain of resolutions and counter-resolutions. She had first tried all her arts to persuade her father to use his influence with Einar to continue the lessons. But this Norderud had refused to do; he was very well aware of the value of his own services to his *protégé*, but his sense of fairness, if not a still finer instinct, forbade him to ask a favor in re-

turn, where he felt that a suggestion was equivalent to a demand. As for the daughter, she could hardly appreciate this complexity of motives; she only knew that she admired Mr. Finsson immensely, and that she was conscious of a tremulous happiness in his presence which she felt nowhere else. She made marvelous progress in French and German under his instruction, as she was anxious to gain his good opinion and to appear to advantage before him. He had come into her life like a beautiful, hitherto unsuspected vista in a familiar landscape. A man had to her, before his arrival, meant a rather unattractive combination of awkward angularities, draped in loosely fitting attire, and enveloped in the mixed odors of grocery stores and stables; but here was a being of the same sex whose appearance and personal attributes seemed to lift him above the earth he was treading and make him akin to creatures of a higher and nobler order, whose features seemed to be cast in a finer mold, whose manners seemed but the spontaneous expression of a gentle and refined nature, and whose clothes, without being either obtrusively fashionable or the contrary, still had a kind of quiet elegance of their own. As for his moral character, it hardly occurred to her to inquire into it. How could a man who was so irresistibly handsome be anything but good? Ingrid, you see, had read no French novels and could not go into ecstasy over picturesque wickedness. She had quietly resolved that her future lover should be good and noble-minded, and as Einar appeared to her very desirable in this capacity it inevitably followed that he must be a man of unstained virtue. It was on her part a pure school-girl's enthusiasm, and as charmingly irrational, innocent and unselfish as such enthusiasms are apt to be.

Four days after the first publication of "The Citizen"



there was a small sewing circle gathered in Mrs. Raven's parlor. Helga, whose unemployed affections naturally expended themselves in harmless charities, had early in the autumn formed a society, consisting of Ingrid, Ida Ramsdale (an American friend), and herself, whose object it should be to look up the worthy poor of the village and supply them with warm under-clothing for the winter. Mrs. Norderud, although she privately believed that it was a more meritorious act in the eyes of the Almighty to clothe a needy Norwegian than a Yankee or an Irishman, had allowed them to draw upon her for funds and had at the start furnished them with a limited stock of flannels, cotton cloths and sewing materials. Helga was very much in earnest with this project of hers, and she had firmly determined that their society was not to be what such societies frequently are—a mere excuse for social gossip and flirtation. There was no coffee and sandwiches, and the gentlemen were not invited to witness the making of the shirts, at the moderate price of ten or twenty-five cents, and to lend excitement to the occasion by their presence and their jocular criticisms. In spite of these precautions, however, the first shirt which the society produced it would have been a severe affliction even for a pauper to wear, and Helga's ardor had been considerably dampened by the sullen manner with which it was received by the Irishwoman who had been selected as the first recipient of their favors. In fact paupers were very scarce in Hardanger, as labor was abundant and wages were very high, and of really worthy objects of charity the village hardly contained a single one. These were hard facts to cope with for a charitable association, but Helga and her co-laborers were not easily daunted, and they persevered in the face of all difficulties.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the day indicated, that the three ladies were seated around the mahogany table in Mrs. Raven's parlor, fitting together detached pieces of a flannel under-garment. A large genial monster of a stove kept up a low, uninterrupted murmur which fell pleasantly upon the ear, while the burning birch-logs snapped and crackled within and sent forth a steady stream of cheerful warmth and comfort. A fresh odor of salted rose-leaves (a reminiscence of Norway to which Mrs. Raven was greatly attached) pervaded the room, and lent to the bloomless flower-pots in the window a faint illusion of summer. The keen wintry day-light, unrelieved by the remotest suffusion of color, fell with a frosty sheen through the white lace curtains and the jingle of sleigh-bells without and the creaking of the snow under the feet of a chance passer-by heightened the sense of comfort and serenity within.

They formed a very charming group, these three young girls, as they sat with bended heads around the mahogany table absorbed in their charitable industry,—Hilga, with all the splendor of her eyes and tresses looking like a fair *Valkyria* of the North, Ida Ramsdale with her slim fragile form and features, capable of intenser expression, and Ingrid, with her American birth and Norse parentage, impressing one as a feebler variation of the former type or an ineffectual approach toward the latter.

Miss Ramsdale was small of stature, quick of speech and agile in her motions; her mouth and chin were well chiseled, and her mouth of good modeling, although somewhat vague in outline. In fact, all her features were admirable in their design; but the design seemed to have been but indifferently carried out, and the result, somehow, lacked finish. Her character, too, evinced the same

curious incompleteness; Nature had started with some very fine intentions, but at the critical moment had lost its patience and finished with a make-shift. The consequence was that Miss Ida, in spite of her apparent shallowness, instinctively recognized fine qualities in others, and felt strongly drawn toward those who stood intellectually above her. Her gray eyes, which fairly brimmed over with suppressed merriment, and the nervous twitching of her lips gave one the impression that she was forcibly restraining all her pent-up, imprisoned laughter, which threatened any moment to explode. Her father had emigrated from Ohio, some five years since, and was now the owner of several large saw-mills in the neighborhood of the village. He was a man of narrow notions, rigidly upright, but, for all that, very difficult to deal with. His principal sphere of activity he found in the Methodist Church, of which he was a very zealous and prominent member. Nature, however, did not seem to have destined the daughter for a conspicuous career in the religious community. Her native cheerfulness made the gloom of her home oppressive to her, and she gladly seized the opportunity to escape into the sunnier atmosphere which reigned in her friend's dwelling. The deep repose of Helga's presence gave her a certain luxurious sense of rest, and soothed her own restlessness. As for Helga, her life had not been too rich in love, and she felt a woman's need of giving as well as receiving affection; therefore, the ardent homage of this impetuous, nervous little woman was very grateful to her. She did not love her as she loved Ingrid, but she had a tender regard for her which was sincere and unaffected. Her devotion for Ingrid, on the other hand, was a long and steady growth, dating back to the earliest days of their acquaintance.

While Ingrid was yet a little girl, Helga had appeared to her the ideal of all that was beautiful, adorable and worthy of imitation. She still looked up to her with an admiration not unlike that with which a generous-minded duck, conscious of her own clumsiness, may be supposed to regard a swan—as the complete carrying out of all the fine intentions which Nature in herself had left unfulfilled—as the idealization of her own species.

The three young ladies had been discussing, not without severity, some of their male acquaintances, and Ida had had the misfortune to select Dr. Van Flint as the object of her good-natured ridicule. She was quite startled at the vehemence with which both her companions sprang to the doctor's defense.

"Why is it," she asked in a meditative tone, which sounded like recitative on a high key, "that if three women, not from Massachusetts, come together, they will in the end get to quarreling about some man?"

"I suppose," suggested Ingrid, timidly, "that it is because a little disagreement makes conversation more animated. And if they were to talk only about one another there would hardly be much room for disagreement."

"Ah, I don't know about that," responded Miss Ramsdale, raising her eyebrows archly. "I rather think that the reason lies deeper. In my opinion, it is very unfair on the part of Providence, that it has invested men with a certain unaccountable fascination in the eyes of women, something quite independent of their personal merits, and, if my experience goes for anything, I should say, that it is the stronger, the more unreasonable it is."

"Your experience must have been a very strange one, then," said Helga, looking up from her sewing with large, serious eyes. "I am sure I could never become fascin-

ated with a man who had no other claims to my admiration than a handsome exterior."

"Neither could I," echoed Ingrid, softly.

"Ah, don't you be too sure of that, my dear," exclaimed Ida, smiling with a sort of caressing superiority. "A girl is a very contrary kind of creature, and is apt to do the very thing she is determined not to do."

"The man whom I could admire," said Helga, dropping her sewing in her lap and gazing out before her with reflective radiance, "must have a strong will, to which everything and everybody instinctively yield, and a lofty purpose. It would matter little to me whether his head was bald and he was small."

"And he had a light, straggling moustache and wore horn spectacles," added Ida, with an explosive little laugh.

"Mere superficial brilliancy," continued the other, blushing crimson (for she readily recognized the picture her friend had in mind), "could hardly for any length of time satisfy a woman's need. If there is anything I cordially detest it is a smooth-faced, smooth-mannered man, whose every word and motion show that he is conscious of his own attractions, who wastes his energy in agreeable talk and is incapable of any kind of heroism, either good or bad."

"Well, since you have made your confession," said Ida, fixing her needle in the bosom of her dress and throwing a flannel sleeve on the table, "I feel inclined to be equally candid. I am afraid I should be very apt to marry the kind of man whom you say you detest. Heroism is a very uneasy, uncomfortable sort of thing, and will never do for every-day wear. I like a steady, easy-going man, who is no whit better and not much worse than myself,

a man who will say pleasant things to me when I am out of humor and not vex me by any high moral criticism, and by telling me what I ought to do, which I am about as likely to know as he. And now, Ingrid, it is your turn to unbosom yourself. Imagine that I am your father confessor and that this is the confessional," she added, with her merry laugh.

And she flung her arms around the young girl's waist and whirled her toward the recess at the nearest window, where she disappeared behind the curtains.

"Now you may commence," she said. "I am silent as the grave."

"I don't think that is quite fair," began Ingrid, hesitatingly, as she returned to her seat. "I have no objection to telling you what I think, but you needn't make so much ado about it."

"That was the introduction," cried Ida, from behind the curtain. "I wait and listen."

"Well, the man whom I should like to marry," said Ingrid, blushing, "must have light curly hair and blue eyes. He must be tall, and have a fine figure and elegant manners."

Here Helga, who had resumed her sewing, sent a quick glance of alarm across the table; but Ingrid was too much absorbed in her subject to note the warning look, and with the same clear, child-like voice she continued:

"He must dress like a gentleman, not too showily, and not wear blue or green neckties. He must be able to speak well and interestingly, and be kind and good-natured toward me, and not expect me to be any better than I am. I don't care much what his position is——"

"But you would prefer to have him an editor," prompted the voice behind the curtain.

The pink blush spread over Ingrid's neck and face, her lips began to quiver pitiably, and two big tears fell down over her cheek.

"Why, my dear little girl," exclaimed Ida, with sudden repentance, springing forward from the window and laying her arms caressingly about Ingrid's neck, "you will not be angry with me, will you? It was very naughty of me to say such things. Indeed, I didn't mean it at all. I only wanted to tease you a little."

After a few sobs, the tears ceased to flow and harmony was once more restored. But the little scene, insignificant though it seemed, left long vibrations in their memories, and conversation seemed but a hollow device to simulate interest in uninteresting topics. It was therefore a relief to all when, an hour later, they separated with mutual protestations of confidence.

## CHAPTER IX.

### NORSE REPUBLICANISM.

IN one of his lyrical monologues, flavored with gentle pessimism and fragrant Ilavanas, the doctor had frequently given vent to a sentiment which I shall take the liberty to quote, because it comes very apropos at the present point of my narrative.

“The barren, neutral background of our lives,” said the doctor, “in these western communities, like the dead gold ground of a pre-Raphaelite painting, makes our poor unpicturesque selves stand out unrelieved in all their native nakedness. It lends no kindly drapery of inherited history or sentiment to round off our glaring unplastic angularities and gather the uncouth, colorless details of our existence under a charitable semblance of beauty. Now, in the Old World it is very different ; there the rich accessories of life, and its deep, warm historical setting, give even to the poorest existence a picturesque or pathetic interest. Here a man has to be something very considerable in order to be anything at all,—in order to escape from being a discordant and unpleasant fact in the great universal world harmony. I never felt more keenly my own culpability in this respect—my own failings in point of picturesqueness—than when I landed for the first time in England. And the worst of it all is that some of us are born with a dim consciousness of our own shortcom-



ings, with vague æsthetic cravings which make our lives at times utterly wretched. In Europe we are unhappy because we love our own land better than all the things we imagine we prize more highly, and at home we are haunted by a lingering regret and a yearning for what we have abandoned, which we know beforehand would cause us still greater misery if satisfied."

It is needless to say that there were very few, if any, of the citizens of Hardanger who were capable of viewing themselves and their thriving community from the doctor's æsthetic point of view. They were all very proud of their village and had all a sense of personal proprietorship in it, which immediately raised it above the possibility of adverse criticism. The more enterprising among them had vivid visions of a future when the trade of the whole western continent should center here, and they looked with ill-disguised contempt upon the aspirations of any neighboring town whose local press had betrayed that it cherished similar expectations. Mr. G. W. Bingham, for instance, could demonstrate by incontrovertible figures that if the village continued to grow at the present rate (and there was no conceivable reason why it should not) it would within twenty years become the natural metropolis of the West. The undeveloped resources of the vast continent toward the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific opened up such a charming prospect for the commercial imagination, and this probability, which almost amounted to a certainty, of future greatness imparted a youthful strength and buoyancy to the business life of the village. Hardanger, you see, was a typical Western town; it modestly regarded itself as a prodigy of intellectual and commercial enterprise; it saw no reason for doubting that the hidden treasures of the Pacific El Do-

rado would in the end be lodged in its pockets, and it chid and ridiculed its neighbors for entertaining similar illusions. The average citizen admired his own pluck and "smartness," and was well content with his own lot, because it had large stakes in the future. He believed himself about as indispensable in the cosmic economy as any mortal on the face of the earth, and, having a fine sense of humor, would cheerfully have tarred and feathered any man who dared to insinuate anything to the contrary. Van H'lint, therefore, had valid reasons for keeping his theory of western civilization within the four walls of his cottage; but for all that, although somewhat superlatively stated, it had a large measure of truth in it, and will in some degree account for the absence of romantic accessories in the present narrative.

"The Hardanger Citizen" was managed, as such concerns usually are, by an executive committee elected by vote among the stockholders, and Nordernd, holding a controlling interest in the stock, had, as a matter of course, been made chairman of the committee. The paper had started with a subscription list of about six hundred, which did not go very far toward paying its expenses, but at the end of the second month the number had risen to a thousand and the prospects were constantly brightening. Einar labored untiringly from early morning till late in the night, and the doctor still continued to read the proof before it went to press and was ever ready with his kindly criticism and assistance. After the indolent, uneasy drifting of former years, when one day followed another in dim, purposeless monotony, this fresh and healthful excitement of useful labor was a most novel and withal grateful experience. Einar felt as if he had made a sudden plunge into the thick of life; all his latent ambition

was roused, and every fresh emergency called out new and hitherto unsuspected resources in his nature. For a definite and honorable calling is like the girdle of Thor, the thunder-god,—the tighter you buckle it, the stronger you grow. Your capacity for labor, within human limits, is in direct proportion to the strength of your purpose.

Einar had accepted the ready-made platform of his paper without much reflection. It had at first been merely a matter of dollars and cents to him; he had neither the necessary experience to make it, nor the right to unmake it. But the fact that his friend, the doctor, had approved of it assured him that it was also worthy of his support. Now, however, he had fully fathomed its meaning and become morally convinced of its excellence. "The Hardanger Citizen" was primarily the organ of the Scandinavian immigrants; it contained weekly reports of the political and social news from the mother countries, but in its editorial comments it assumed a distinctly American point of view and was throughout its columns strictly loyal to the institutions of the grand republic. Its first aim was not to keep up the immigrant's connection with his old fatherland, but to make him an intelligent voter, and a useful American citizen. This was, indeed, a work great enough to sanctify a thousand honest failures, great enough to make martyrdom sweet, and success the perfection of happiness. The harvest was rich; thousands of immigrants would draw inspiration from one strong and manly voice, and as Einar, week after week, sent forth his words of warning, counsel and cheer to his toiling countrymen, he felt as if it were strong enough to reach to the farthest limits of this broad continent.

One day, in the middle of March, Norderud was sitting in the office of "The Citizen," glancing over some long

strips of manuscript which Einar had placed on the desk before him.

"That is very good, Mr. Finnson," said he, in a tone of profound satisfaction,—“that about the ecclesiastical tyranny of the Old World. Our own ecclesiastical tyrant will find that a hard bit to swallow. The clerical digestion is said to be equal to almost anything, but I shouldn't wonder if this would prove a little too much even for an evangelical Lutheran stomach.”

“I meant no special insinuation against Mr. Falconberg,” replied the editor, sticking a colored pencil behind his ear as he glanced up from his proof-sheets. “But the Norwegian clergy in this country seem to me to represent the senselessly stubborn, conservative element, which regards America merely as a land of temporary Egyptian exile, and its institutions as sheer barbarism and every way inferior to those of the Old World.”

“You have hit the nail on the head there, sir,” said Norderud, rubbing his hands and chuckling with pleasure; “and of all the slow-witted, pig-headed prelates which Norway has sent over here to torment us, our own is the most dangerous, because he has got most fight in him. I don't think he would be afraid to venture a partnership with the devil himself, if he thought he could beat me by his assistance. But let him wait awhile, and we shall make it hot for him.”

Here the door of the office was flung open and revealed the crooked and twisted form of Magnus Fisherman, who had by this time recovered from his chronic attacks of the fever and ague. The old man, with his black, piercing eyes and hooked, vulture nose, came hobbling in on two sticks, threw his hat respectfully on the floor, and seated himself on a bench near the door.

“Good-morning, Magnus,” said Norderud, with the frank cordiality with which one greets an old comrade. “I haven’t had time to come and see you of late ; but I sent my little wench down to inquire, the other day, if you might possibly need anything, and she told me you were not at home ; so I concluded you must be all right.”

“Oh yes, yes, Nils,” began Magnus, in his shrill, plaintive tenor ; “you are a stanch old chap, you are. And that I have always said to Annie Lisbeth, too,—‘Nils Norderud is a steady old craft,’ I have said, ‘straight and sure both fore and aft.’ We should have been in a fine fix, Annie Lisbeth and I, by this time, if it hadn’t been for you, Nils, for you are not——”

“Yes, yes, I know all that, Magnus,” interrupted the farmer, with a smile of good-natured indulgence. “But what I wanted to know when I sent for you was whether those crooked old sticks of yours, which I am afraid never will be good for much, are strong enough now to allow you to do some work. We need another messenger here in the office, and I have proposed to Mr. Finnsen that we should engage you, if you will promise to attend to your duties regularly and not run off on a wild-goose chase whenever the fancy happens to strike you.”

“I guess it is a pretty poor opinion you have of me, Nils,” responded the old man, dolefully. “But it was my bad luck that my mother—God be merciful to her soul!—brought me into the world, like any other water rat, in a herring-yacht ; but, for all that, I shouldn’t wonder if I can hobble about with them newspapers of yours, as they aint very heavy, and as I have always said to Annie Lisbeth——”

“Very well, then, you will come here to-morrow morning, and Mr. Finnsen will tell you what you have to

do. But, by the way, I suppose you are all right in your politics, Magnus,—a good, straight Republican, eh?”

“Republican! Ah yes! I have been a pretty straight old chap, ready to stand up early and late for my king and my country,—and to risk a blow, too, if that were necessary——”

“King and country! Are you dreaming, man?” And Norderud straightened himself up in his chair and brought his broad hand down upon the desk with loud emphasis. “Don’t you know that you are living in a free country, where one man is as good as another, and where the law shields rich and poor alike?”

“Sure enough, Nils Norderud, you never uttered a truer word than that. But if God Almighty had cared to make me a gentleman, he would have done it, king or no king. And as he didn’t choose to make a gentleman out of me, it won’t be of no use for me trying to alter the will of God Almighty. And you can’t make me say that I am as good a man as you are, because I know well enough that I aint, for I aint got more than an old axe and a fishing-rod as don’t belong to you or to somebody else.”

“Good gracious!” cried Norderud, this time unable to control his impatience. “Here you have been living in a republican country for twelve years, and probably never once made use of your vote. Possibly you haven’t even taken out your naturalization papers?”

“I guess you aint quite right there, Nils,” retorted Magnus, in a tone of cheery protest. “It is some years ago now as two chaps come to my house in a buggy and took me out of my bed, for I was down quite bad with the dumb ague. And they drove off with me and gave me a scrap of paper and told me to vote for Honest Old

Abe. And as I didn't know anything bad against Honest Old Abe, I got out of the buggy to put the scrap of paper into the box. But then some chap there flew right at me, and said, 'You aint a United States citizen, sir.' 'Old fellow,' say I, 'you aint got no right to shake your fist at me.' 'You aint got no papers,' says he; 'you aint no citizen.' 'Paper?' says I, 'I have got this paper here, and I am a-goin' to put it in the box for Old Abe, as these gentlemen here have told me to do.' 'That is all right,' says he, 'but you aint swore off your old king and your old country.' 'Swore off my king and my country!' cried I, for now I got real mad; 'you won't catch me up to no such tricks. The king aint done me no harm, so I don't see why I should swear him off.' Then the fellow dragged me off, and two or three others helped him, and I kicked and scratched all I was good for; but they took me and locked me up, and didn't let me out for three days, all because I wouldn't swear off my king and my country."

Norderud sat quietly listening to this recital with an expression of mingled amusement and vexation. He did not care much whether Magnus voted or not; but while the resigned fatalism of his social creed had something irresistibly comical in it, it was, on the other hand, to a man who built all his hopes of political advancement on the enlightenment and intelligence of his countrymen, exceedingly discouraging to discover that his boasted race could produce such hopeless subjects for republicanism as the garrulous old blockhead with whom he was talking.

"Well, well, Magnus," he said, at last, with a sigh of resignation, "we won't dispute any more about politics. Only come here to-morrow morning, and if you can man-

age to hobble around for a couple of hours and distribute the papers, I will pay you handsomely for it."

As soon as Magnus had departed, Einar broke into a hearty laugh, and he and Norderud had some serious talk together about the approaching campaign, each devising ingenious schemes for the political education of his countrymen.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE MAY FESTIVAL.

It may be difficult to estimate with any degree of certainty how much of the largeness and cheerful liberality which characterize the present constitution of Norway may be owing to the influences of the season which gave it birth. From internal evidence, however, I should be inclined to believe that the spring of the year 1814 was exceptionally bright and genial, and displayed none of those morose moods with which even the month of May is apt to surprise us in northern latitudes. I seem to hear the lark warbling his melodious prophecies of summer through the open windows of that Eidsvold mansion where the constitution of the Norsemen was framed, filling the legislative hearts with a cheerful trust in Him who, holding the political seasons in his hands, would surely now send forth his summer of liberty over the land, after four centuries of wintry thralldom. Perhaps, too, the swallow, that swift-winged bird of promise, had just returned from her exile, with a few lingering notes of the warm south still re-echoing in her shrill song. The Norsemen, with all their native sturdiness, have always been keenly sensitive to these æsthetic influences of the seasons, and although the theory has never before been advanced, I venture to assert that the sauguine, genial May co-operated faithfully with the stern legislators, lift-

ing her bright voice of spring in the council halls, and impressing her sunny signature with those of Rein, Krog and Nordahl Brun upon the constitutional parchment. Whether consciously or not, the Norwegians of to-day certainly recognize this fact, and there is, to my mind, an especial appropriateness in their celebrating the return of liberty and the return of spring on the same day—the seventeenth of May.

It argues no blame to them, no disloyalty to the institutions of their adopted fatherland, that whenever two or three of the Viking race are gathered together on that day, at home or abroad, they unfurl their national banner, and rejoice with all the enthusiasm of their honest northern blood in the event which, more than half a century ago, placed them once more in the ranks of free and self-governing nations.

In the Hardanger calendar the seventeenth of May had been set down as a holiday of equal importance with Christmas and Easter, since the earliest days of the settlement. During the primitive period, when Norderud still lived in a log cabin, pervaded with the odors of the adjoining cow-stables, he had been in the habit of calling together at noon his family and servant-girls, and saying, with impressive solemnity: “Boys” (including both males and females under that common appellation), “this is the day when our country gained her freedom. We shall do no more work to-day;” whereupon he would fill a footless wine-glass with brandy, and present it in turn to each one present, from the oldest to the very youngest. The women, of course had to be urged before they could be induced to take a sip, and sneezed and made wry faces afterward; but it was a tribute which every one had to pay to the festal occasion, and a refusal would have ar-

gued disloyalty and a reprehensible indifference to the blessings of liberty. Later on, when the district had become more populous, when the log-cabin had given way to a comfortable frame house, and the Norse conservatism to the American spirit of progress, a tumbler was substituted for the old broken wine-glass, and the more dignified address, "Fellow-citizens," for the old, informal "Boys." But through all the manifold changes from pioneer life to more advanced civilization, the seventeenth of May had ever remained a day set apart from the week-day toil for bread, a day hallowed by great memories,—all the greater, perhaps, to the multitude, for being so vaguely understood.

Among the plans conceived by Einar and Norderud in common for rousing their countrymen from their political apathy was the formation of a Scandinavian club for political debate and discussion. The project, when broached by the latter at a meeting called by him, had been received with more than the expected enthusiasm, and when he had modestly refused the presidency, Einar had been unanimously chosen. It was this club which had now taken it in hand to arrange the programme for the festival of liberty. Before Einar's arrival the pastor had been the self-appointed orator on all such occasions, but as Mr. Falconberg's oratory was of an antiquated and very unrepublican kind, consisting chiefly of moral maxims and exhortations to humility and submission to the God-given authorities, and as, moreover, the public had an opportunity of being edified by him at least fifty times in the year, the club thought it might safely venture a breach upon tradition and confer the honor of the speakership upon its own president. The appointment was accordingly made, and Einar, who believed all the world

as generous and fair-dealing as he was himself, could see no reason why he should not accept. He had unlimited confidence in his eloquence (and what youth has not?) and thought himself fully capable of delivering a stirring oration. Moreover, his brief editorial experience had filled his heart to overflowing with things of vital importance which he wished to say to his countrymen, and now the opportunity had been providentially afforded him for saying them.

Aurora, to use an Homeric simile, rose from Tithonus's conch in the east, wrapped in an airy *négligé* of fog. The hills around the town shone with a misty radiance, and the outline of the leaf-forest, with its fresh, young foliage, stood softly defined against the blue horizon. In spite of the mists, which were slowly dispersing before the rising sun, the air was buoyant and invigorating. Down at the little pier at the end of the lake lay two small steam tug-boats, gayly adorned for the occasion with Norwegian and American flags and streamers. They seemed so much like animated things, as they lay there in their festal attire, rumbling and groaning and sending out from time to time exultant little shrieks, as if they shared in the general hilarity. The moment of departure was drawing near, and members of the committee of arrangements, with badges of red, white and blue in their button-holes, were running busily to and fro, carrying luncheon baskets, ladies' shawls, muskets of ancient and modern pattern, and a multitude of other articles more or less essential to the festivity of the occasion. Then began the exciting process of helping the ladies down the steeply sloping gangways which connected the boats with the pier, the nervous little screams of real or affected timidity, the soothing assurances that there was no danger, the usual masculine

assumption of protecting superiority and display of agility or unintentional awkwardness. It was a scene deeply interesting to an ethnologist or a social philosopher. The mingled interjections of Anglo-Saxon and Norse speech,—the latter in all imaginable shades of dialect ; the few and vanishing reminiscences of Old-World costume, the subtly-graded types of countenance and facial expression, showing the gradual adaptation of the old type to the new soil, were all easily legible characteristics of a society which is still in the process of formation,—a society in which two struggling civilizations meet, and slowly blend together, forming a new and hitherto unknown unit. There were women of all degrees of rusticity, some intensely conscious of their bonnets, and belonging manifestly to that order which has but one dress for week-day and one for holiday wear ; there were others who had just begun to make the first uneasy discoveries of their own social deficiencies, and whose attire displayed ineffectual and often grotesque aspirations toward ladyhood, and there were again others whose costume and bearing had that instinctive grace, that soft tranquillity which is the gift of birth and is but slowly acquired. But all these people were grouped about on the pier in a very democratic fashion, and talked, laughed and exchanged familiar greetings with an ease and abandonment which gave emphatic evidence of the equalizing influences of pioneer life and American democracy.

Since the disagreement about the umbrella, Einar had preserved a studied indifference toward Miss Raven, and devoted himself with increased assiduity to Miss Norderud's instruction ; but now the inspiration of the great day pervaded his being like a warm glow, and all petty feelings were drowned in the strong current of patriotism.

The sense of a common origin which is always so powerful a motive in a foreign land seemed ten times intensified on this day ; a great common memory stirred every generous fiber in the Norsemen's bosoms, drove personal animosities out of sight and made them but remember that they were all Goths,—that they had all sprung from the strong, fair, broad-breasted, mountain-guarded Saga-land beyond the sea.

As the gangways were hauled in and both steamers glided out upon the lake, the whole multitude, as with one impulse, joined their voices in the national song, " Sons of Old Norway." The mist still lingered in the air, although it was half transparent, and lay upon the water like a thin, white veil ; and the song floated away and mingled with the mist, and they rose together up into the joyous spring sunshine. At last there was neither mist nor song ; for a brief moment all was silence.

" What a glorious day this is ! " said Helga to Einar. They were sitting together on camp-stools in the prow of one of the steamers, she clad in a soft gray dress, which, like everything that was hers, seemed a wonder of grace and simplicity, he, arrayed as the occasion required, in a dress-coat, with a white neck-tie, and with a black, shining cylinder on his head.

" It is a tradition we have in Norway," answered he, " that the seventeenth of May must be as fair as God can make it, and I should suspect that the patriotism of my countrymen here was on the decline if they departed from the old tradition."

" Tell me something about Norway," said she, after a brief pause. " You know I am one of those unfortunate creatures who really belong nowhere. I was carried away from Norway before I had fairly struck root there,

but when I was still too old to become thoroughly domesticated in the new soil into which I was transplanted. I am too much of an American, I imagine, to be perfectly happy in Norway, and yet too much of a Norwegian to feel perfectly at home here."

"You have stated very pointedly the great problem of an immigrant's existence," replied Einar, with animation. "And since you have to make the best of your present situation, and remain where you are, I should be doing you a very poor service, if I were to call to life the dormant longings for your native land. It is far better to suppress them. Let us not forget that we are all Norsemen, but if we are not forever to remain exiles, let us first of all remember that we are also, or ought to be, Americans. That is the lesson I am going to preach to my countrymen and countrywomen to-day, and if I shall but succeed in pleasing one among them whom I have in mind, I shall be the happiest man the sun ever shone upon."

"You mean Mr. Norderud," said Helga, innocently. "Yes, a great deal depends upon your pleasing him. But then, you know, he is always ready to be pleased at what you do and say; so I should have no fears on that score."

"The person I refer to is far more difficult to please than Mr. Norderud."

Here a member of the committee of arrangements whispered something in Einar's ear, and he arose hurriedly, and excused himself. A minute later his fine tenor was heard in the double quartette, sustaining, with a clear, soft precision, the difficult solo in Kjernerf's "The Wedding Party on the Hardanger Fjord." Helga sat listening with rapt attention, but still vaguely wondering to whom his words alluded and hoping that it might be In-

grid. Now one song followed another in rapid succession, until the whole party, at about ten o'clock, landed on an improvised pier at the foot of a deep ravine, where a large tent was raised and preparations had been previously made for their reception. The place had evidently been chosen because the scenery was supposed to suggest Norway; although to an æsthetic eye the resemblance must have been very remote. It was one of those broad, forest-clad gorges which at every third or fourth mile break the monotony of the landscape around the lakes of Minnesota and central New York. In the midst of gently sloping, fertile plains a yawning abyss, with huge chaotic upheavals and a primeval wildness of aspect, opens abruptly at your feet, as if Nature, conscious of her deficiency in point of picturesqueness, had had a sudden attack of waywardness, only to show that her early strength had not quite forsaken her. The bottom of the ravine was covered with sprouting maples and birches, and here and there with patches of fine, light grass. A small stream broke over the edge of the rock and dashed in a series of cascades toward the lower plain, winding thence onward over a broad, pebbly bed and descending with ever gentler murmur to the glittering lake.

As soon as the passengers had disembarked, the steamers started once more for the town and returned toward noon with a second load, the greater part of whom were business men, both Norse and American. Einar then ascended the rostrum, which was appropriately adorned with the combined colors of Norway and the United States, and, with a wildly palpitating heart, stood listening to the cheers of the multitude. And when at last the noise subsided, he broke out with a clear, youthful ring in his voice:



“Norsemen, fellow-citizens.”

“Oh, how handsome he is!” whispered Ingrid, who stood leaning on Helga’s arm some twenty or thirty steps from the platform.

“Hush, dear!” whispered Helga, in response, and pressed Ingrid’s hand more closely in hers. There was a great surging and eddying motion in the throng; all pressed nearer to the speaker, and stood with expectant, upturned faces.

“There was a time, now centuries ago, when a strong arm and an unbending spirit were the greatest inheritances a father could bequeath to his son. In those days our forefathers roamed over the wide world, holding the destinies of nations in their hands; for our forefathers were strong; they knew not fear; their joy was war; their pathway went from victory to victory; their glory was to conquer and to die. How often did the domes of cathedrals re-echo in those days with the cry: ‘Deliver us, O God, from the fury of the Norsemen!’ In Normandy, in England, in Italy, and even in the far East our fathers have left the imperishable tracks of their conquering march. The Anglo-Saxons of to-day count it an honor to be able to trace their blood back to the conquerors of the North. The proud aristocracy of England boast that it is our blood which flows in their veins. But the time when rude physical strength was a people’s chief claim to glory is now happily past. And did our glory perish with that age? To a superficial vision which does not penetrate beneath the appearances of things it certainly seems as if it did. The voice of Norway is now but feebly heard in the councils of nations; our sword and our war-cry do no longer strike terror to the hearts of our enemies; no prayers for deliverance from us rise toward the throne of

God, for no one fears us. It is an undeniable truth, bitter as it may seem, that we have retired from the visible arena of the world's history. But the great event which we celebrate this day loudly proclaims that our power has not yet perished, that there is yet health and strength in us to regain what we have lost,—regain it, not with the sword, but with the gentler and yet potent agencies which an advanced civilization has placed in our hands.

“This strange movement which we call emigration, and over which theorists and social philosophers have pondered in vain, is one of these agencies, and perhaps the most important of all. Once, nearly nine centuries ago, we planted our foot upon the virgin soil of Vineland,\* and still the glory of its discovery does not belong to us. Once more in the present age we have returned to our lost heritage, not to conquer it with force, but to share peacefully with other nations in the abundance of its blessings. Here in this wondrous land a new and great people is being born; a new and great civilization, superior to any the world has ever seen, is in the process of formation. It would be a foolish and ineffectual labor if we were to try to preserve our nationality intact, if we were to cling to our inherited language and traditional prejudices, and endeavor to remain a small isolated tribe, forming no organic part of this great people with which our lot is cast. For one generation we may appear to succeed, but the success would be a very tragical one and hardly worth the labor. And our children and grandchildren, yielding unconsciously to the tide which irresistibly sweeps them onward, would soon unlearn what we had taught them and undo

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\* The name given by the Norse discoverers to the American continent.

what we had accomplished. But even if we abandon these external claims to distinctive Norsedom, however dear they may seem to us, we shall retain those deeper and unextinguishable traits which truly constitute our nationality, and these our children will inherit, and they will be ingrafted upon the new stock and mingle with the warm heart-blood of the nation which is being born, and it will be the greater and the stronger for what it shall owe to us. The best productions of our art and our literature will become known and will exert a quiet, gradual influence upon the art and literature of those among whom we live, until, at last, by a silent process of organic absorption they will pervade with a thousand other influences the grand civilization which the future hides in its bosom. Our children, feeling themselves no longer as strangers but as heirs to the soil, will exert their power in the various walks of life, and the sturdy Gothic qualities inherent in our blood will survive in our American descendants and will add strength to the future race.

“No doubt many of you, in whose ears the loud deeds of our ancestors are still re-echoing, will think this an humble destiny for a people once so proud as ours. But let us fearlessly open our eyes to the modes of working which God employs for the advancement of the race. The far-resonant conquests of our fathers which our bards are still commemorating in song and story,—what traces have they left behind them, except these silent and invisible ones, these decisive and yet half impereceptible modifications of the character, life and society of the succeeding ages? Is Norse speech ever heard to-day in England or in Normandy? The Norse songs and traditions which Duke Rollo and his followers brought with them from their home, did they remain distinct and intact, asserting

their nationality against all foreign encroachments? No; they mingled with the life-blood of the conquered nation. They did not perish; they modified the future; they are alive, though invisibly and silently alive, unto this day. Therefore, my countrymen, let us not foolishly and stubbornly cling to the semblances of nationality, and lose its reality, its deeper essence. Let us not transplant that which is accidental and evanescent in our old life upon the new soil. Let us be alive to the larger needs of the day in which we live, asserting ourselves fearlessly as Norsemen, still ever remembering that if our lives are not to be spent in vain, we must first of all be Americans."

A feeble and scattered cheer here interrupted the orator, and a few groans were heard from the outskirts of the crowd. Norderud, who was sitting on a bench at the foot of the platform, then raised his voice in a mighty hurrah which awakened a more general response, and the groans which seemed to come from a party of young men who had gathered around the pastor were silenced. Ingrid was quivering with sympathetic excitement; she clung more closely to Helga while her eyes hung upon the face of the speaker with irresistible fascination. Einar, who during the pause had quickly scanned his audience, caught her eye, and the sight of the eager young face sent a sudden warm thrill through him and strengthened his waning courage. He went on in a tone of calm confidence strangely at variance with his inward agitation; defined in brief, incisive sentences the historical significance of the day, and reviewed eloquently the great memories which clustered around it. Here he struck skillfully those national chords which never fail to vibrate even to the gentlest touch. Great shouts of applause shook the air; a smile of intense satisfaction illuminated

Norderud's square-cut features, and Ingrid breathed freely, as if a great burden had been lifted from her bosom. The constitution of the seventeenth of May, Einar said, embodied a principle which was closely akin to that which the Americans had announced in their Declaration of Independence. If the Norsemen of the United States helped to carry out in its true spirit this declaration, remaining ever faithful to the honesty and lofty self-dependence which they had imbibed with their mother's milk, they would be celebrating in the highest sense their own day of liberty. He now spoke with a happy freedom and earnestness which stirred the deepest depth of his listeners' nature. He chose his metaphors from the life which moved daily under their very eyes, and his warm appeals went straight to their hearts. When he descended from the rostrum the members of the Scandinavian Club, in spite of his protests, raised him upon their shoulders amid the wild cheering of the multitude. That was too much for Ingrid; the long-restrained agitation overpowered her, and she burst into tears. But happily no one noticed her, and Helga hurried her up through the ravine, where the trees soon hid them both from sight.

Einar's speech was published the next day verbatim in "The Citizen," and Norderud, who found here a clear and eloquent statement of his own political creed, had it afterward printed in pamphlet form and liberally distributed among friends and enemies.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A MEMORABLE MEETING.

DURING the dinner which followed, Einar looked everywhere for Helga and Ingrid, but they were nowhere to be found. In the meanwhile he had to answer toast upon toast, and in the interval between the speeches he was beleagnered by farmers' wives who came up to shake hands with him and with much friendly urging insisted upon his tasting the contents of their baskets. They assured him in their own simple fashion of their approval, declared that he "talked like a priest," and without the least suspicion of patronage complimented him on his handsome appearance. Nils Nyhus offered a toast for "The Citizen," in which he paid fresh tribute to the memory of his lamented sorrel, expressed his dissatisfaction with Andy Johnson's administration and predicted a brilliant future for the town of Hardanger. He seemed still to be laboring under the delusion that the idea of establishing the paper had originated in his own brain, but was generous enough to grant his colleagues a share of the honor. The speech called forth much merriment and hearty acclamation, which, however, only added to the discomfort of Nyhus's wife, who was sitting flushed and trembling at his side. She had never known him in the capacity of an orator before, and she could not rid

herself of the impression that the company were amusing themselves at his expense.

Up toward the end of the ravine where the trees stood denser and the noise of the waters was louder, sat Helga and Ingrid. A thick copse of pine sheltered them from sight, and the gray rock, dashed here and there with patches of red and yellow lichen, rose steep and threatening above them. The sprouting leaves filled the air with a fresh fragrance, to which the pines added a resinous flavor. The two girls sat each with one arm twined about the other's waist, while the elder with the hand which was disengaged stroked the hair caressingly from the younger's forehead. They were talking together in an undertone, and the near, unceasing rush of the water seemed to lift a shielding roof over their voices and make their confidence safer and easier.

"It certainly was very imprudent of my little girl," said Helga, "to burst into tears there before all the people. It was fortunate that he was too busy to notice you."

"But how could I help it?" protested Ingrid, eagerly. "It came upon me so suddenly that I had no time to think. I don't know why God made me so, that I must always cry when I don't want to do it at all. It was not for Mr. Finnson that I cried, as you think, but only because I felt so strange, and because I couldn't help it."

"Yes, because you felt so strange, and because you couldn't help it," repeated the other, smiling at the caprices of Ingrid's logic. "And do you imagine, you little chicken, that I have not read long ago that very transparent secret which you are trying to hide from me?"

Ingrid raised herself quickly and gazed at her friend with terror in her large blue eyes.

"You do not suppose that—that anybody else——"

"You need not look so frightened," and Helga clasped her once more in her arms. "No, I don't suppose that others have as keen eyes for reading your heart as I have. But now be a good little girl and promise me one thing. Promise me that you will be very, very prudent, always on your guard, and never describe the man you would like to marry, never say that he must have light curly hair and blue eyes, and so forth."

"But I never said that I should like to marry Mr. Finnsen," rejoined Ingrid, once more with her little perverse pout. "And I don't think I ever shall marry, for that matter. But still I love him—love him," lingering fondly on the word. "And," she added, with a sudden trustful appeal to Helga, "don't you think he is very, very beautiful?"

"I don't know, my dear, what I think of him. He is one of those men who constantly puzzle me. I hope and believe that he is a good and upright man, but that is as far as my judgment goes. I am sorry, for your sake, that I cannot say more, but really I cannot. And now your eyes no longer betray that you have been crying. If you do not hurry back, your mother will be frightened about you."

"And will you not come with me?"

"No, not now. I promised mother to find some maidenhair for her to plant, and since I am here, I may just as well commence my search. I shall be with you in less than half an hour."

Helga stooped down over the young girl, kissed her and began to climb up through the ravine. She had not gone far when she heard a voice, which she instantly recognized as the pastor's, talking with loud and indig-







IN THE RAVINE.

nant emphasis somewhere under the ledge upon which she was standing. The stones were constantly loosening and rolling down from under her tread, and she feared that she had no choice but to remain until the speaker was no longer within reach of her involuntary missiles.

"I have watched you closely and with sincere interest ever since your first arrival," said the pastor, evidently addressing some invisible listener, "and I have seen with deep regret how you have, day by day, driven God out of your heart and allowed Mammon to take up his abode there in His stead. It is really a pity to see a young man with your undeniable talent going to the devil in that way."

"Mr. Falconberg," answered another voice, whose refined enunciation and dignified self-restraint immediately revealed the orator of the day, "I thank you for your interest in my welfare, which I confess rather takes me by surprise, but I can hardly admit your right to judge me as severely as you do. A judgment of my character, in order to be correct, requires certain premises which you do not possess, and which I do not feel inclined to furnish you."

"Now really, young man," broke in Mr. Falconberg with increasing excitement, "I am afraid you have quite forgotten the office I hold as the pastor of my flock and a rightfully appointed shepherd of souls. How can I watch with complacency the direful work you are accomplishing in this community, where, before your arrival, peace, harmony and mutual good-will prevailed? Through your detestable paper you preach schism and rebellion against all divinely appointed authority, teach these poor ignorant farmers, who have hitherto trusted in the guidance of their spiritual superiors, to judge for themselves about politics

and other things, about which they cannot possibly have even the most rudimentary notions, and what is worst of all, you steadily labor to break down the wall which has hitherto separated them from that idolatrous, sectarian Babel in which it is their and your misfortune to live."

"I regret to say, Mr. Pastor," answered the young man, calmly, "that our opinions on these subjects are so radically different that discussion would only widen the gulf between us, instead of bringing us nearer together."

"Ah, my dear sir," cried Mr. Falconberg, excitedly, "that is a mere pretext for evading my arguments. Your own conscience—if you are still possessed of such a thing—must have told you that you are guilty of the charges I have preferred against you. Have you not this very day stood up and flaunted your immature opinions in our faces? What do you, a mere stripling in years, who have yet hardly had the first glimpse of the life here, know about Norse and American civilization? And yet you presume to teach your elders, who have spent half a lifetime here, and discourse to them about their duties to their new and their old fatherland, and God knows what not!"

"Ah, that is where the shoe pinches," thought Helga, whose growing interest in the discussion made her quite forget that she was involuntarily playing the eavesdropper. The strain of ill-natured abuse which the pastor had adopted had immediately enlisted her sympathy on his opponent's side, and her womanly sense of justice and fair play made her eager to lift her voice in Einar's defense. At the same time Einar's well-bred coolness tried her sorely and vaguely impressed her as a lack of confidence in his own cause. Ignorant, as she was, of his real relation to the pastor, she could hardly appreciate the compli-

cations of motives which restrained the native vehemence of his speech. It was, however, a genuine relief to her, when in his next answer she detected a rising ardor and a clearer tinge of self-assertion.

“Mr. Falconberg,” he said, with a touch of defiance in his voice, “what I have said to-day, and what I shall continue to say, as long as there is a single man left to listen to me, is no hasty whim, but my sincere and well-matured conviction. And I can see no reason why a young man, especially if he is publicly requested to speak, should not have the same right to express his conviction as one who has grown gray in the office of preaching. You and I, Mr. Falconberg, belong to two different generations, and I venture to assert that the future is in closer sympathy with my opinions than with yours. In private you may think me a conceited stripling or even an impostor, if you choose, but I do not admit your right to censure me to my face. I entertain due respect for your years and for your office, but I have never enlisted myself among your parishioners, and even if I had, I should say that you were overreaching your authority, if you undertook to abuse me, as you have done to-day, for things which do not come within the range of church discipline.”

The pastor turned ashy pale; he sent his undaunted opponent a furious look, and clenched the golden head of his cane. He had felt so safe in the feeling of his strength and authority, and had been confident of an easy victory. The smooth manners and apparent modesty of this man had deceived him as to his real character, and now the fearlessness of his counter-attack stunned Mr. Falconberg and for the moment deprived him of his ample rhetorical resources.

“Young man,” he whispered, in a tone which sounded

like an angry snarl, "you and I have not yet done with each other. And beware, when we meet again."

Helga leaned out over the edge of the rock. She saw the pastor's bulky form retreating among the trees; she could hardly suppress a cry of exultation. She knew that her joy in his humiliation was rather nugenorous, but for all that she could not but rejoice. He had found his match at last, and where he least expected it. She looked down and saw Einar sitting upon a stone, resting his head wearily upon his hands. How blind she had been! how shallow and faulty her judgment of him! She had mistaken his well-bred self-restraint for weakness, and had not seen the fine manly fiber in him which hid itself beneath a modest, unassuming exterior. He, too, had a noble life-work, a grand idea for which he struggled and suffered in silence. As she saw him sitting there, lonely and dejected, her heart went forward to him with a sudden tenderness—a mere impetuous wish to do him justice, to right the wrong she had done him. Generous and impulsive as she was, she yielded with a headlong eagerness to her first inspiration. One large and ardent thought with her habitually crushed all those smaller considerations, which with most of us kill our generous promptings before they have wrought themselves into action. The possibility of misinterpretation hardly occurred to her. She hastened onward over slippery stones and through jungled underbrush and stood at his side, before he was yet aware of her presence. She laid her hand gently upon his shoulder and whispered his name. He looked up with a startled, incredulous glance, then sprang to his feet and grasped the hand she had extended to him.

"Miss Raven!" cried he, with a vain effort to adjust his features into their usual expression of mere polite

interest. "Have you gone astray, or am I dreaming?"

"Neither," she said, smiling and making no attempt to withdraw her hand. "I only came to thank you for the beautiful speech you have given us to-day. You have stirred all the latent Americanism in me, and still made me feel more Norse and patriotic than I ever felt in my life before. Never did my duties appear so grand and so clearly defined as they do now. And you know I like even hardships better if they only seem large. It is only petty and insignificant troubles with which I have no patience."

"Sit down," he said, releasing her hand and spreading his light overcoat upon the stone where he had been sitting. "You do not know what a good deed you have done. I never needed praise more than I do at this moment. And the thought that you have come here to tell me that you have drawn inspiration from my words is sweeter to me than I dare tell you."

"And if I did not really come for that purpose," asked Helga, whose candor could not suffer even an implied deviation from the truth, "would my praise then be less welcome to you?"

He looked at her doubtfully as if he did not quite know what to answer.

"Then I must tell you all," she went on, returning his look with an almost boyish frankness. "I was gathering ferns up in the ravine right above your head, and the stones were rolling down under my feet. Then I heard the pastor's voice right under the ledge of the rock upon which I was standing, and without meaning to hear what he and you were saying, I could not really help it, for you were both talking quite loud. The expedient of putting

my fingers into my ears did not occur to me until it was too late. I owe you an apology, and I offer it the more readily, because I can read in your face that you will forgive me. Am I not right? Will you not try to forget that I played the eavesdropper?"

And in her solicitude for his good-will she laid her hand on his arm and leaned over toward him, while her warm, appealing smile seemed suddenly to make the spring day more luminous around him.

"Forgive! forget!" cried he, dimly apprehending that this strange new happiness which pervaded him might carry his eager tongue beyond his control. "What have I to forgive or forget? I am in the maddest mood for saying wild things to-day, Miss Helga. And you must not mind what I may be saying. Only give me the comfort of pouring out my grievances in your ear. I am extravagantly happy. Never mind the paradox. And still I fear at times that I shall go mad, because it seems as if this silently struggling intensity within me must in the end explode my brain. Do not look so startled, please. I warned you that I was going to talk nonsense. It is so very rarely you give me the privilege to be with you, that I could go on talking forever, heedless of what I said, if I knew that my words had the power to keep you here at my side."

"That is another of your polite paradoxes, Mr. Finnson," answered she, gayly, "and I take it for what it is worth. And even if I should accept your offer and remain here with you, as long as you could entertain me, I am afraid I should be doing you a very poor service. I dare not monopolize you, you know, on a day like this, when you are the great lion, and everybody is seeking the honor of your acquaintance. Therefore, if you will allow



me to advise you, we will both return to the tent and try to practice the magnificent theory of citizenship which you have to-day been expounding to us."

"You are right," he murmured. "You are always right. Only not about the monopolizing."

He arose, took the few feathery ferns she was holding in her lap and helped her down the steep declivity. As they reached the bottom of the ravine, where there was a path along the banks of the stream, Helga discovered some tall, gracefully waving plumes of maidenhair on the other side, and gave vent to a long exclamation of admiration and playful despair. In an instant Einar was in the middle of the stream, where the strong current made it seem impossible for him to keep his footing. The water swept in small, gurgling eddies around his knees, and for a moment he tottered. Then, grasping hold of the branch of a tree which drooped at a very acute angle out over the clear shallows, he swung himself dexterously from stone to stone, and in three or four leaps landed on the further side. The ferns were carefully rooted up, and before Helga had time to frame a protest, he had recrossed the stream, and added them to the small collection already in hand.

"But, Mr. Finnson," she exclaimed, in a voice of alarm, "what made you do such a foolish thing as this? You are dripping wet, and will certainly catch your death of cold, if you do not return to town directly."

"That is rather unkind of you," he answered, shaking first one foot and then another; and he sent her a gaze in which a kind of dogged perverseness was visibly struggling with a more impetuous emotion which threatened to break out into flame.

"I meant no unkindness," said Helga, seriously. "I

was only anxious about the consequences of your rashness. You may be sure, I shall never utter a wish again in your presence. I did not know that so polished a man as you could be guilty of such romantic eccentricities. But I am afraid I shall have to revise my judgment of you, radically and thoroughly. I see you utterly refuse to accommodate yourself to my former ideas of you. Indeed, you are almost a dangerous character."

She had meant to be gently admonitory, but the ludicrous side of the situation was urging itself upon her, and she broke into a hearty laugh. She might persuade herself as much as she pleased that his act was a piece of unmitigated folly; it was, after all, the kind of folly which appealed to the romantic side of her nature. For beneath her quiet, decorous exterior lurked a vein of latent romance which imparted, as it were, a warmer flush to her very repose. You felt that her usual self-restraint was far removed from apathetic indifference, that it was rather an armed neutrality of strong invisible forces.

"You must really excuse me, Mr. Finnson," she said at last, checking her laughter. "But the *rôle* you are playing to-day is so out of keeping with the character I have ascribed to you,—is so utterly incongruous, that I cannot but laugh, although I am still doubtful whether I am laughing at myself or at you."

"The *rôle* I am playing," cried Einar with a vehemence not unmingled with indignation. "Never in my life was I more in earnest! How long will you persist in regarding me as an idle trifler? I always thought that you were generous and just, and would not allow yourself to be prejudiced by appearances, however much they may be against me. And if I have been mistaken, if you think me unworthy of your friendship, I pray you, do not tell

me so. Even the possibility of gaining your good will is a great and precious boon to me, while the certainty that I could never gain it would stifle the courage which is just kindling within me."

Helga had suddenly become thoughtful; a vivid blush burned upon her cheek, and her heart palpitated violently. A strangely sweet and still guilty thought was knocking at the door of her heart and clamoring to be admitted. There was triumph in it and there was humiliation. She had imagined herself incapable of listening even to the faintest whisper of treachery; hitherto her proud integrity had carried off an easy victory, and the voice of temptation had ever seemed remote—absurdly remote and unreal. She was angry with herself, that she could not now repel a guilty thought with the same ease as in former days. Did Einar love her? The idea seemed quite preposterous; for she had made up her mind that he loved or must love Ingrid, who, indeed, would be the very wife for him. She had received Ingrid's confidence, and even encouraged it, and now she found herself cherishing with uncontrollable throbs of pleasure the possibility that her lover had given his heart's first allegiance to herself. But whatever may have been her feelings, she managed outwardly to preserve her self-possession and to feign an unresponsive coolness which immediately checked her companion's impetuous outburst.

"I am afraid your success as an orator has disturbed your mental equilibrium, Mr. Finnson," she said. "If I should allow you to go on indulging your taste for hyperbole, I fear you would soon soar beyond the reach of my understanding. Then you must remember, I have not had my dinner yet, and it is a peculiarity of mine that hunger always makes me obtuse and unsympathetic."

Einar stood silent, but it was that agitated, restless silence which only finds relief in physical action and not in speech. He swung his cane nervously in his hand, and gazed with a grim intentness at some object on the other side of the creek. Helga, taking the lead, moved down the path, and he followed in a reckless saunter. The still May sunshine which, as the day wore on, had deepened in tone, fell with a warm profuseness through the thin, light foliage, and a luminous, half-transparent roof of cloud spread like a vast, tangled and torn spider's web over the dome of the heavens. The incessant rippling and gurgling of the water filled their ears and made speech seem superfluous. As they approached the lake, they heard the sounds of violins, human voices and the trampling of feet, all blended together and softened by the distance into a low, unbroken hum; only now and then a bit of melody somehow got detached from the blended confusion, straying off with a few airy leaps, and again vanishing with unaccountable suddenness. Gradually the noise grew louder, the vivid colors of ladies' dresses were seen shimmering through the leaves, and laughter resounded between the bleak rocks. With two long strides Einar was once more at Helga's side; without a word of warning, he seized her hand, while she stopped and looked at him with startled eyes.

"Miss Helga," he said, with a low, passionate earnestness, "forgive me my folly. You were right when you said that this day's triumph has been too much for me. And then the humiliation, too, and the intoxication of your sympathy. I do not really know whether I have offended you or not, but I fear I have. I know you must have had cause to be angry with me. But you will not be angry with me. Will you, Miss Helga?"

There was something irresistibly sweet in this tender appeal, and a feeling which, in her blindness, she took for compassion, began to stir dimly within her. She raised her eyes to his, meaning merely to express that she was in a sisterly and forgiving mood, but half unconsciously responding to the fervid intensity of his gaze. But now there was a rustling in the bushes, and Ingrid was seen running up the path, all aglow with heat and excitement.

"Oh, are you there at last, you naughty girl?" she cried, as she caught sight of Helga. "I was getting quite anxious about you, fearing that you might have tumbled over some precipice. And there is Mr. Finnson, too. Everybody is asking for him and wondering what has become of him."

Helga had suddenly withdrawn her hand; her cheeks were burning, and her heart went hammering away with quick, audible throbs. She could think of nothing to say to Ingrid which did not seem in some way false and hypocritical; and a caress which, between them, was always an acceptable substitute for spoken sentiments, appeared now like base duplicity.

"Why, how very solemn you are, both of you!" continued Ingrid, innocently, as her first exclamations elicited no reply. "Has anything extraordinary happened?"

"Yes, Miss Ingrid," answered Einar, in the tone which one is apt to adopt toward a sweet but spoiled child, "something very extraordinary has happened. Miss Helga wanted some beautiful ferns that grew on the other side of the stream, and I, in my folly, wishing to do her a favor, waded across, which very naturally made me wet. And when I returned, Miss Helga, instead of thanking me, gave me a scolding, and now, you see, we are both pouting."

This explanation seemed very plausible to Ingrid, who threw her arms about her friend's waist and laughed so heartily, that the others were compelled to join.

"To think of Mr. Finnson doing anything so very unfashionable," she cried, while her child-like, unreflecting laughter rang through the woods. "The next time he will swim across the lake for a daisy or a dandelion, if you happen to want it."

In the great tent, where a rough plank floor had been laid, the dancing was going on, with trampling, shonting and arm-swinging, according to old Norse fashion. On the croft outside the unengaged maidens had gathered in a throng, and large, awkward swains were hovering about, trying to conquer their modest reluctance by jocose persuasions, and when these proved unavailing, by more forcible means. On the edge of the gayly draped platform, which had but recently shaken under the weight of Einar's eloquence, Nils Nyhus was now sitting, developing his political creed to half a dozen farmers, who manifested their approval or dissent by emphatic nods or interjections of doubtful remonstrance. The orator held in his hand a flat pint bottle of brandy, with which he judiciously re-enforced his arguments whenever he became conscious of their weakness.

"I don't care much that Andy Johnson gets tight," Einar heard him saying; "the best man will get tight now and then, when he is in good company. But his gab sir—his gab, that is what I can't just swallow. You just uncork him, and he will rattle away for an hour or more, as long as there is anything left in him, like a bag of peas as has got a hole in the bottom. Now, the king of Norway may be bad enough, and I don't say as he aint, but I don't think he ever lied. He saith to one, 'Come,' and

he cometh, and to another, 'Go,' and he goeth; but he don't gab like a rickety old woman as haint got anything better to do."

The bottle was here passed from mouth to mouth, and was returned to the speaker, who continued to recite his objections to the President.

On a grassy hillock, near the entrance to the tent, Miss Ramsdale and Doctor Van Flint were engaged in an animated discussion. They were old friends, and, for this very reason, never missed the opportunity to have what they called a little "tilt" with one another.

"You and Miss Raven are as intimate as ever, I suppose," the doctor was saying, as he removed his horn spectacles from his nose and rubbed them with his silk handkerchief.

Van Flint's spectacles seemed to be such an essential part of his face that you half imagined him to have been born with them. To surprise him without his glasses would have been as embarrassing as to come upon him inadvertently in an unbecoming dishabille. His eyes then blinked incessantly, appeared to have grown smaller, and to have lost something of their usual genial luster.

"Well, yes; do you think that is so strange?" Miss Ramsdale replied, putting herself immediately in an attitude of defense. "You probably fail to see what can attract her to so frivolous a creature as myself."

"Yes, it does seem rather singular," said the doctor, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"I shall have my revenge on you, Doctor, sometime when you lest expect it," ejaculated Miss Ida, with her nervous little laugh, and shaking her tiny parasol threateningly in the doctor's face.

"But you certainly yourself provoked the attack. I

was in a most peaceful frame of mind, and had no inclination to break a lance with you."

"It appears much more unaccountable to me, that Helga can have such an exalted notion of a man who cherishes so mean an opinion of her sex as you do, Doctor."

"I am quite ready to agree with you." And that radiant, winning smile, which seemed somehow an abstract of the doctor's whole personality, broke through his bushy mustache and spread slowly over his countenance. "But for all that," he went on, "I am agreeably surprised to hear that anybody, and especially Miss Raven, has an exalted idea of my accomplishments."

"And why 'especially Miss Raven'? Would it surprise you less if I were to tell you that I have the most unbounded admiration for you?"

"Yes. It would only confirm my previous opinion of your whimsicality, and add another to the many contradictions of your character."

"Now, that I call base treachery," cried the girl, shaking her piquant head and aiming a wild-flower, which she had been twirling in her hand, at the doctor's face. "Here I have for years been nursing a serpent in my bosom. I have believed you my friend and unobtrusively revealed to you my peculiarities, and you have only been studying me,—only valued me as a means of confirming or testing the validity of your detestable theories of female imperfection."

"Even so, my dear. And since you have learned that it is not safe to measure strength with me in controversy, I propose that, temporarily at least, we suspend hostilities. Here is my hand."

Ida, with playful reluctance, put her small, daintily be



gloved hand into the doctor's broad palm, laughed and rose to go.

"I will forgive you this time," she said. "There, I see Helga and Mr. Finnson coming. Let us go to meet them."

"Tell me, Miss Ida," said Van Flint, in a confidential tone, as he walked on at her side, "can you imagine why Miss Raven has taken such a dislike to Finnson? She always scouts his opinions as utterly absurd, and refuses to show the amiable side of her nature in his presence. Finnson is certainly a very handsome and gentlemanly fellow, and I, for my part, cannot understand why anybody should dislike him."

"There, at last I have an advantage over you," answered Ida, smiling. "After all, I understand women better than you do. Helga, you know, has the idea that a man should be something grand and heroic, and I am afraid she is often apt to take mere oddity for heroism. Now, Mr. Finnson is too smooth and polished and gentlemanly for a hero, and that is what makes her so impatient with him. She was probably at the outset, judging from his magnificent performance on the organ, determined to believe him great, and has ever since been looking in vain for the heroic trait in him."

"I gave her credit for greater keenness of perception than she evidently possesses," said the doctor, meditatively. "However, everybody can't be a hero, and he certainly is more of one than either she or others are ready to suspect."

The subjects of their conversation were now within hearing, and Ida had to check her tongue and refrain from further comment.

"My dear girl," she cried, as Helga advanced toward her, tall, stately, and with a mild seriousness in her face,

"I have saved half the contents of my lunch-basket for you, and as my appetite, thanks to the doctor's lecture, has had time to revive since dinner, I shall be happy to bear you company."

The discomfort of wet stockings and trowsers rather chilled Einar's ardor for the rest of the day, and made him eager to return home by the first steamer, which started for the town about seven o'clock in the evening. Helga and Ingrid were both tired, and Van Flint, whose note-book had received many valuable contributions, had now quite satisfied his literary curiosity; he had observed how Norsemen conducted themselves in a crowd and when under the influence of patriotic excitement, which enabled him to settle several important points regarding the ancient *Althing*\* and to make the picture of such a gathering vividly present to his imagination. Miss Ramsdale and Mrs. Norderud also boarded the same boat, which arrived in Hardanger just as the moon rose, large and glowing, over the eastern hill-tops.

In the tent the dance continued until twelve. Then the shrill steam whistles shrieked. The young men and maidens embarked, and as they sailed out upon the water a fine Norse tenor sang the beautiful national anthem, "Yes, we love this land of ours." It rose clear and solemn through the still night.

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\* The legislative assembly of the ancient Icelanders.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TAR AND FEATHERS.

THE editorial brilliancy and the financial success of "The Citizen" had for months past been the leading themes of conversation in Hardanger. The stock had risen rapidly and was now worth nearly three times its original value. The handsome young editor, whose polished exterior and undeniable cleverness had at first been commented upon with a certain knowing suspicion, rose with every day higher in popular favor, especially since his influence had manifested itself so strikingly in the late county and state elections. Be it in parenthesis remarked that virtue, according to the Hardanger code, must needs be clumsily arrayed, slow of speech and devoid of social graces; elegance and agility of mind and body, especially in a person whose antecedents were mythical, were *a priori* a suspicious circumstance. It was not until success had stamped them with approval that they were recognized as adding to the luster of their possessor.

The spirit of competition which sociologists assert to be the grand motor in our Western civilization was mightily stirred in Hardanger by the unexampled prosperity of Norderud's paper. Immediately after the spring elections no less than three new journals were started, two of which died an untimely death, while the third eked out a

sort of negative existence by contradicting the statements of "The Citizen" and flinging abuse at its editor and candidates. This ill-natured survivor, which had been christened "The Democratic Banner," had secured the editorial services of Mr. George Washington Bingham, who, after having exhausted all manner of possible and impossible agencies and changed his profession and politics at least a dozen times (though never without some plausible reason), had now at last found his proper sphere. He dispensed his gall with a liberal hand, mostly in the shape of puns and watery witticisms, and strove with an ingenuity worthy of a better cause, to feed the antagonism which had always existed between the Norse-Republican and the Irish-Democratic elements in the population.

To Einar, with his Norse notions of honor and civic duty, this manifest desire to produce hatred and discord seemed almost fiendish, and he and the doctor spent many an hour in earnest discussion as to what course they should pursue toward their importunate persecutor. With his keenly sensitive temperament he could never quite conquer the angry stirrings within him when he read the contemptuous adjectives which were daily applied to his name. It might have been easier to meet them with disdainful silence as the doctor advised, if his own tender conscience had not so often echoed the senseless accusations. The gad-fly to which the Greek sage compared himself might have been a mere petty annoyance to the noble horse of state, as long as his skin was whole; but if it kept ever pestering an open wound, the severe measure which the horse in the end adopted was not without excuse. Between our hero and his antagonist the advantages were almost as unequally divided, only here the case

was reversed, the gad-fly having the advantage of the horse. The one was bound by scruples from which the other was conveniently free; and the one who scorned to retaliate with the same weapons with which he was attacked had, before the public which they both addressed, only very slow and ineffective means of redress. "The grand vizier of our self-constituted sultan," "That mendacious interloper," "That detestable ink-slinger," etc., were expressions at which the doctor could well afford to laugh, but which never quite lost their sting to him whom they were intended to vilify.

To complicate the situation still further, dissensions broke out among the Norsemen themselves. Any student of the Sagas knows what a genius this race has for quarreling, and the energy displayed on the present occasion was gratifying as a proof that the Saga spirit was still as active as ever. After the May festival the pastor no longer scrupled to invoke the wrath of God upon Norderud and his followers, and with every day he grew fiercer in his denunciations. It is so comfortable to believe that one's own enemies are also the enemies of the Almighty; and the Old Testament, as Mr. Falconberg remarked, furnishes an abundance of evidence as to how people of that order ought to be dealt with. To eject Norderud from the church which he had himself built and for whose growth he had labored so faithfully, was a measure which had to be carefully prepared, and to this end the zealous prelate cautiously sounded the minds of the more influential members of his congregation, and as a skillful tactician rallied his forces about him. Like every powerful man, Norderud of course had his enviers, and, moreover, there were among the immigrants of later years many who honestly disapproved of his leaning toward American-

ism and his apparent disloyalty to the land of his birth. Among all these the pastor found willing listeners and before long the hitherto peaceful settlement found itself divided into two opposing camps, each of which held itself in readiness for an hostile encounter. Mr. Falconberg's partisans, who clung to their Norse monarchical beliefs and traditions, soon became known as the Norse-Norsemen, while the progressive republicans who gathered around Norderud's banner called themselves Norse-Americans.

Hitherto the whole Norse population of Hardanger had (to use the pastor's phrase) followed the Republican party as faithfully as the tail follows the horse, but now the antagonism toward "The Citizen" and its editor produced numerous political conversions and brought an unexpected increase to the constituency of the "Democratic Banner." Both parties were equally primitive in the importance they attached to anything which appeared in print, and it would no doubt have transcended their logic if their scanty reading had brought anything to their notice which conflicted with the catechism and the tenets of Lutheran orthodoxy. It is therefore only fair to believe that the Norse-Norsemen acted in good faith when they chuckled over the witticisms of "The Banner" and spread the vituperations which were every week showered upon "the self-constituted sultan and his grand vizier."

On the evening of the fourth of July, while the town band was playing on the square in front of the Norderud block, an excited group of Scandinavian youths had gathered on the corner at O'Leary's saloon and were discussing the leading question of the day with considerable vehemence. "The Citizen" for that week had contained the assertion that "the bondage in which the Norwegian

clergy kept their countrymen not only retarded their growth to spiritual manhood, but also injured their political influence and made them subjects to the very power they were so zealously combating." The dispute was every moment growing more violent; the more hot-headed among the pastor's adherents accused their opponents of hypocrisy, disloyalty, etc.; from words they came to blows, and a street brawl seemed imminent, when they were joined by Mr. Bingham of "The Banner," and the Norse-Americans, seeing that they were out-numbered, retired from the field followed by the uproarious jeering and hooting of the victors. Bingham invited the remainder into the saloon, gave them a liberal treat and exhorted them not to waste their powder by fighting one another, but, if they had any pluck in them, "to go to head-quarters." A plan of attack was at last agreed upon; a barrel of tar and a few pounds of feathers were, by the help of the editor, procured from a neighboring store, and the company divided into two parties, one of which proceeded up Elm street to the doctor's dwelling, while the other stationed itself at a corner not far from the square.

Einár had been spending the afternoon at the office and had returned home rather later than usual. He had come to dread holidays of late, for he sometimes feared to be alone with himself. In the routine of his daily duties, while he was grappling with visible obstacles, he found a safeguard against dangerous thoughts. The motive of concealment, which at the time of its adoption had seemed so easy and innocent, weighed heavily upon his sensitive soul. Many a time a passionate yearning to fling the burden away rose within him, and again and again, when he sat alone with the doctor in the latter's study, the decisive word trembled upon his lips. But

always the consequences rose dark and threatening before him and his courage died away. Even the affection of those whose friendship was dear to him was not without its sting of humiliation, for if they knew his real self, shorn of its imagined virtues, how long would their affection survive?

And still, he might perhaps in time have trained himself into a kind of restless resignation, and in the varied conquests of his career, found some source of contentment, if a new and powerful element had not entered into his life, and made a compromise with evil impossible. The fitful gusts of enthusiasm which had agitated him at the first sight of Helga had now gathered themselves into a strong unceasing current, which swept his life onward with its passionate impulse, bending every thought, and purpose and deed to its sway. Love, if it be true and deep, is a terrible self-revealer. It shuns half measures. It turns its pitiless light upon the hidden stains of the soul, stimulating us to an ever keener perception of our faults. And Einar felt more acutely with every passing day that the endeavor to win Helga's love, as it were, under an assumed name and character, would only deepen his guilt, and add to the load which already oppressed him. And still, how his lonely heart hungered for the sight of her, for a touch of her hand, nay, even for the unconscious rebuke of those calm, serious eyes. He had noticed of late that she avoided meeting him; that she no longer smiled her kindly welcome upon him when he sought her on Sundays after the service; that she was invariably engaged when he called to see her. Had her unerring womanly perception revealed to her what he had so scrupulously striven to conceal? Alas! the doubt was even harder to bear than the hopeless certainty. If



he confessed all to her, would she not have pity on him? For he felt sure that with all her prond integrity, there was a deep fund of womanly pity in her heart, and she would not coldly condemn him.

It was with reflections like these dinly struggling in his brain, that Einar started from the doctor's cottage on the Fourth of July, and his steps half imperceptibly led him in the direction of Mrs. Raven's residence. It had been a hot, sultry day, as the Fourth of July is apt to be, although the sky had, during the afternoon, been shrouded with a somber veil of cloud. After sunset, a grateful coolness had lightened the atmosphere, and now the clouds were rolling away over the heavens in large white masses, showing deep rifts of blue ether between their airy embankments. Here and there a little star twinkled uneasily, but from sheer modesty vanished if you gazed fixedly upon it. The air teemed with strange subdued noises—that remote, indefinable hum with which the summer night shrouds itself, in our temperate zone, as with a thin robe of sound. The locusts kept up their monotonous whirr in the elms along the road-side, the grasshoppers responded with their shrill metallic note from their hidden ambushes in the grass, and swarms of mosquitoes, attaching themselves to any chance wanderer, danced up and down in the air, showing now with sudden distinctness against the sky, then again vanishing into the twilight. All was so hushed, so solemn, so gently subdued. Even the stiff frame-work of the scattered houses, which stood with their gables to the street, rose with a softened outline out of the dusk, and the little garden-plots wafted out breaths of vague, warm odor from the chalices of slumbering flowers.

Einar was sauntering leisurely along the wooden side-

walk, stopping now and gazing out upon the mist-flooded valley, as the haunting dread of the possible future came upon him, then again walking on with renewed energy. He was striving to rout the fears that he felt to be unworthy of him, to steel his courage, and gather into a definite resolve the strength that had hitherto wasted itself in wild yearnings. Yes, yes, he would confess all to Helga. She *must* hear him; she must hear him *now*. With impetuous speed he hurried forward, when a man suddenly started up from the ditch close to him, and gave a sharp whistle with his hands, which was answered with a loud yell from further up the street. He stood still and listened; his whole soul seemed to be trembling in his ear. He heard swift footsteps approaching, and with a sudden realization of the danger, flung himself about and started to run. The figure in the middle of the street whistled twice, but did not pursue him. Another whoop, louder than the first, answered from the other direction. He paused for a moment for breath, and stood panting, pale, and bewildered. The clatter of feet hummed in his ears, coming nearer and nearer. With a desperate resolution, he turned once more and ran with his utmost speed, he hardly knew whither. The ground surged and billowed under his feet, dark masses moved before his eyes, and he felt only the air whizzing fiercely about his temples.

"There, there! He is coming!" shouted a voice close in front.

"Catch him! Hold him tight—the d——d brute!" cried another.

"Tar him, feather 'im! The cursed hypocrite!" was shouted from behind.

All around him fierce, strong hands clutched him. His

hat and coat were torn off. With all the strength of despair he struck right and left, rushing hither and thither, tearing, thrusting and leaping, until something hard flew against his head, and through the cold numbness that held him as in an iron embrace, dim voices broke and hovered far and near, whirling him with an airy, dizzying speed upward, downward, through the wide unfathomable space.

Amund and Thorarin Norderud had been making an evening visit at Mrs. Raven's. They were just lingering at the gate in pleasant converse with Helga, who was sitting on the front steps, when the confused cries and noises from the street reached them.

"Hush, listen!" said Thorarin. "Some one is in distress. Let us go and see what it is."

"Yes," replied Amund, "and there is hardly any time to be lost. It is something serious. Good-night."

And they both started in hot haste down the road. Helga sprang to the gate, and peered anxiously in the direction where they had vanished. Her heart stood still, and a vague dread shook her frame.

The mob had, in the meanwhile, gathered in the middle of the street where Einar lay, half naked, bloody, and insensible. Some, terrified at the destruction they had wrought, had given up their ultimate purpose, and sauntered uneasily on the outskirts of the crowd. They had promised themselves a good sport, and now they trembled at the thought of having perhaps destroyed a human life. It is not such stuff as they that murderers are made of.

"The devil!" muttered one. "He fought like a wild beast. It is d——d business. I am glad I had nothing to do with it. I didn't touch him."

"You didn't!" cried another, whom the fascination of

seeing a human being bleeding and mutilated still kept near the center. "I should like to know, then, who did. I saw you fling the brick. I can swear I saw it."

Here, in an instant, the crowd flew apart, and the two brothers sprang forward; then knelt down at the side of the victim.

"Great God!" exclaimed Amund. "It is Finnson. Dead! Dead!"

"Hurry, quick!" commanded Thorarin. "Run for the doctor—Doctor Reimsen. He is nearest. I dare not move him till he comes."

Amund rushed away, and his brother, hardly knowing what he could do, sat gazing mournfully at the pale, upturned face. There was a large wound on the side of the head and the blood flowed freely. Then at least he was still alive. Thorarin was painfully conscious of his inability to help; he thought of raising the bruised head, of binding his handkerchief about the wound, to contrive in some way to stop the blood, but very likely he might be doing mischief instead of good. Of the hooting, jeering crowd not one was left; the street was silent and desolate as far as the eye could reach; only the crickets sounded their patient monotone in the grass.

At last rapid footsteps were heard approaching; it was Amund and the doctor. A light was struck, for the day was ebbing swiftly away and the twilight hardly permitted one to ascertain the extent of the injury. The face was deathly pale, and, strangely enough, one eye was staring with a glassy, dilated pupil, while the other was singularly contracted; the doctor placed his finger on the sufferer's pulse,—it was feeble and irregular. He shook his head in a way that the brothers well knew how to interpret. The nearest gate, leading into a bit of mea-

dow, was torn from its hinges and the insensible body carefully placed upon it. Amund and Thorarin lifted it, one at each end, and led the way toward Mrs. Raven's dwelling. It was the nearest house within reach, except a few dismal cottages.

Helga was still standing at the garden gate. Her vague apprehension had in some unaccountable way deepened into a very definite dread, and as the men passed by her with their burden she hardly stirred or spoke. She only clung convulsively to the gate-post and trembled violently. But when the door was opened and the light from within revealed the hideous work of violence, she bounded forward, stooped down over the half-clad, motionless form outstretched on the bier, and stood staring with fierce, incredulous eyes. Then with a low moan she turned about and moved away.

Norderud's sons lifted the body, slowly, tenderly in their arms and carried it in. In the hall they were met by Mrs. Raven.

"God have mercy on us!" she cried, raising her hands above her head with a gesture of terror. "Great heavens, what has happened?"

"It is Finnson," said Thorarin; "we could not carry him farther."

The doctor, on examination, found that the skull was fractured, probably by the corner of a brick, but it was a clean wound and the brain appeared to be uninjured. The broken bone was easily raised without use of the trepan, but the concussion must have been severe, for consciousness did not immediately return. The strange sighing respirations continued, but the pulse-beat became fuller and less rapid, and the eyes began to show a slight sensibility to the light.

Mrs. Raven and Thorarin in the meanwhile were engaged in making ready a room upstairs for the reception of the patient. It was the room which had once been occupied by Gustav Raven, and it had remained empty since the day he had departed for the war. The old lady went bustling about, talking half aloud to herself, but evidently for Thorarin's benefit. Now she paused to brush away a tear, as she took down the faded dressing-gown and the little round, tasseled smoking-cap which were hanging on nails against the wall; now she touched with caressing hands the white curtains around the looking-glass and the toilet-table and disposed the folds properly, or, perhaps, shook the rug in front of the bed, and gazed in regretful retrospect at the dainty embroidery of the slippers.

"To think that anybody should ever sleep in his bed, Thorarin," she said in a voice of tearful remonstrance (for as a gentlewoman she took the liberty of calling all Norderud's children by their first names). "Not that I would deny a poor fellow shelter as long as I have a shingle over my own head. No, God preserve me from ever committing such a sin. But here on this toilet-table I put out a bottle of the kind of perfumery which he always liked (and he *was* always fond of smelling things, poor boy!), and he never came and got it, and so here it stands until this day. And when he wrote that he was to come home in a month on a furlough, then I thanked God that my great calla-lily was swelling as if it were going to blossom about that time. And blossom it did. But at last I had to cut the flower and I made a fine bouquet of roses and hyacinths, and some greens and the great calla-flower in the middle. And as I went to bed that night I thought surely God would send him back to me that day.

For it was He who had made the calla-lily open, and my Gustav always was so fond of the smell of it. The Lord knows I weep this day as I did then. Here are the flowers yet in the vase on the table, Thorarin. They are all dead now. And when we bought our new table and bed-linen I would not mark it S. R. with my initials as I had always done before, but I marked it all G. R., for I thought that some day he would want to go to Norway and get himself a good wife, and then it would be well to have the linen marked with his own name so he wouldn't have to buy it all new. Here you see, Thorarin—and then to think that he should never come home to his mother again and never go to Norway and never get any wife.”

Mrs. Raven stood tearfully viewing the pillow-case with the embroidered initials, but seeing that her companion was too much absorbed in the present misfortune to have much sympathy to spare for her, she laid it down with a sigh of resignation, smoothed it out carefully, and moved toward the door.

“One moment, Mrs. Raven, if you please,” demanded the young farmer, walking close up to her and speaking in a confidential whisper. “I am sorry that we have brought all this trouble upon you. It is all my fault, and I hope you will allow me to bear the expense, whatever it may be. But probably——”

“Sir!” interrupted the old gentlewoman fiercely, drawing herself up into an attitude of stiff dignity. “I hope you are not aware that you are speaking to the widow of a royal Norwegian government——”

“Yes, yes, certainly I am,” broke in Thorarin, a little impatiently. “I assure you I meant no harm. But we will say nothing more about it, at least not to-night.”

"I am glad you have recovered your senses," rejoined Mrs. Raven, still visibly bristling.

Down in the lower hall she met Amund, who inquired anxiously for Helga.

"How is he now, the poor young man?" asked she, heedless of his question.

"Not much change yet," answered Amund, sadly. "We must move him upstairs at once."

"Oh yes, yes, we must thank God," murmured she, moving her hands and head in token of effusive gratitude. "Since this thing had to happen, we should be grateful to God that it did not happen to us."

Mrs. Raven had a notion that sickness and misfortune were a kind of force or fluid which was hovering about in the air, and in the end had to come down on somebody; and with the generosity peculiar to her type of Christians she prayed devoutly to God that that somebody might be her neighbor rather than herself.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### NIGHT-WATCHERS.

AN hour after midnight, while Amund was watching at the bedside where Einar was lying still apparently insensible, there came a light tap on the door and Helga entered. The white cambric *négligée* clung airily to her form, revealing its graceful undulations, the rich hair was twisted into a loose coil on the back of her head, and the agitation which burned in her face added a new luster to her usually calm eye. She advanced noiselessly to the bed, drew the curtain aside and gazed at the pale, motionless face which rested on the pillow.

"No change?" she inquired in a whisper, turning to Amund.

"No. He is alive, but that is all."

"Go to the guest-chamber and lie down for a couple of hours. I will watch in the meanwhile."

"No, Helga, I am not tired," remonstrated Amund. "I can stand it at least until morning."

Poor Amund had always gloried in the advantage he had over his rival in being permitted to call her by her baptismal name, and even now he was conscious of a feeble triumph as he pronounced it. And still I am not sure but that he would have renounced that dear privilege, if his self-sacrifice could have called Einar back to life and health.

"I wish to remain here," answered the girl with quiet determination. "I cannot sleep before I know whether he is to live or die. Go, and take your rest, as I tell you."

He was so accustomed to obey her that it hardly occurred to him to offer further resistance. So he arose and went toward the door, but he could not master the impulse to pause and catch another glimpse of her wonderful face. She had seated herself at the foot of the bed, resting her chin on her hand, and as the light of the lamp fell upon her, it imparted a strange marble pallor to her features; and with their clear massive cut, and the large lines of her flowing drapery she looked startlingly like one of the divine forms of antiquity invested with a sudden transient life.

Arnud heaved a deep sigh.

"Why, are you not gone yet?" whispered she, motioning him away with her hand.

"I am going, I am going," murmured he apologetically, as the door closed softly behind him.

Hjelga sat long gazing absently before her, and in the intense hush of the sick-chamber the conflicting voices of her soul seemed to grow stronger and more audible. In the presence of a great misfortune, when the first stunning shock is over, the consciousness usually grows more painfully clear and active. Did she not know, although she had hardly dared confess it to herself, that this strong young life, which seemed to be ebbing away here at her side, had belonged to her—had been hers by right of that mysterious divine law which draws young lives irresistibly together? And during the two months which had passed since he had allowed her to read the hidden writing of his heart, how fiercely had she wrestled with her-

self to convince herself that it was all a delusion ! Why did God, who is so good, send into a woman's life these stern, insoluble problems, these passionate conflicts, which could only bring suffering or brief guilty happiness ? Why had he awakened that swift response in her heart to Einar's unspoken love, if it were merely to be the source of sorrow to him as well as to her ? Ah, no, she knew these were wicked thoughts. She would try hard to conquer them. Her vision was clouded ; she had proudly depended upon her own strength. She would pray God to help her, to give her wisdom to see, and meekness to bear, even that which seemed dark and inexplicable. She sank down on her knees before the bed, resting her forehead on her folded hands.

When she arose her sweet face shone with a serene radiance and her rebellion was quelled. Not that she received any direct response ; but the action itself had lifted her into a serene atmosphere of peace and trust. Instead of vexation of spirit had come hope and strength of resignation, and as her gaze once more dwelt on the pallid features which lay in faint relief against the white pillow, her heart swelled with deep womanly pity. A tear trembled in her eye and coursed down over her cheek ; then came another and another. The heavy, feverish spell was broken and the grateful current gushed forth, easing her oppressed heart. She drew the white bed-curtain aside and let the light fall upon the unconscious countenance. It was a beautiful face, of noble cast, exquisitely sensitive, refined, manly and generous.

" Ah," she whispered, " I was cold, and hard, and cruel to you. But I will make it all good again, if God will only restore you to life and to me."

With an overmastering impulse of tenderness she

stooped down and kissed the white, bloodless lips. The curtains again resumed their wonted folds, and she sat long thinking with morbid pleasure how, if he should never recover his health, but remain feeble and helpless, she would nurse him and cherish him, and devote her whole life to him, in return for the life he would have devoted to her if it had been his to give. Ingrid would then willingly renounce him, and her empty life would be filled with a dear and undoubted duty.

The sources of affection lay deep in Helga's nature, and with that generous impetuosity, which was the mainspring of all her actions, she seldom thought of any other reward than the delight of the sacrifice itself—the eternal joy of eternal giving.

Her eyes fell by accident upon a piece of paper which lay on the table. It was a hasty direction written by the physician, as to the method of treatment. She merely read :

“If the temperature of the body does not rise within an hour rub the hands, etc.”

She immediately took the listless hand which lay nearer and began to rub it between hers. Presently there was a slight twitching of the mouth, and as in her joyful surprise she sprang up and the chair fell backward with a crash, a sudden gleam of consciousness came into the blank eyes. A quick tremor ran through his frame, the lips moved nervously as if they wished to speak and a hand was lifted for an instant but fell again helplessly on the coverlid.

“I wished—to tell her all,” she heard him murmur. “I did not care—what—would—become of me.”

“Hush! hush, Mr. Finnson. You must not attempt to

“speak now,” she said, in a soothing whisper. “You are too weak. Wait till you gain strength.”

He evidently understood what she said. Her heart gave a great bound, but fearing that the emotion awakened by her presence might at this moment be injurious to him, she quietly retired behind the curtain, then ran lightly across the floor, and called Amund to take her place.

During the following week the color stole gradually back into Einar’s cheeks, and life was beginning to regain its hold upon him. The intracranial inflammation which the doctor feared, did not occur, although slight fever symptoms caused some alarm during the third and fourth days. Doctor Van Flint and Amund watched over him in the night, and Helga was his companion during the day. It was touching to see how the joy kindled in his eyes as she entered, and again died out of them as soon as she departed. She was indeed the ideal of a nurse. There seemed to be healing in her warm, restful presence. Her light, noiseless tread, the soft brightness of her face, the touch of her hand, as she moved about performing all the gentle offices of the sick-room, all fell upon his hungry sense like the vivifying dew upon the parched flower. Whether she was cheerful or sad, whether there was peace in her mind or she labored with agitation, her face wore always, while she was with him, the same quiet smile of unperturbed contentment.

As with returning health his pleasure in external things revived, he began to note the many quaint objects in the room which breathed memories of its former occupant. In many a silent reverie he reconstructed his character, making his conclusions as to his personal habits, and from these again to his manner and his appearance. The faint

perfume of the flask of jasmine on the toilet-table, and the rare brand of the few remaining cigars in the prettily carved cigar-holder, representing a grotesque figure of a dwarf carrying a huge basket, told of the fastidiousness which this heir to a complex civilization had carried with him into his exile in the wilderness. The fine-textured linen cambric handkerchief with the delicately embroidered initials in the corner, with which the sister had bathed his forehead, could only have been handled by white, aristocratic fingers; and the French novels in yellow paper covers and a few old numbers of the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*" were fruitful in pathetic suggestions. Scattered here and there on the walls were photographs and engravings, browned with age and dust, and soiled by the flies. Above the book-case opposite the bed, the new-born Venus rocked languidly on the foam of the sea, and in the tobacco corner and around the looking-glass forgotten enchantresses of the Parisian stage smiled in happy unconsciousness of their scanty attire. They made it perhaps doubtful whether the owner's conversion had been as complete as his posthumous reputation asserted. His cheerful worldly tastes and spendthrift habits had evidently clung to him even here, where their gratification was next to impossible; yet he presented a charmingly quaint picture to the imagination, Einar thought,—this elegant young rake with his pleasure-loving temper, his white hands and his airy manners, among the ponderous, toiling pioneers, to whom indulgence was a sin, and pleasure a snare of the devil.

What a puzzling phenomenon he must have been to them! How they must have stared when he sauntered up the church aisle, or vented his well-bred sarcasms on the effusions of the Reverend Marcus Falconberg! But all

these offences death had covered with its cloak of charity, and the name which was once an abomination to pious ears, was now crowned every spring with fresh flowers, because he died the death of a hero.

"Do you remember your brother well?" asked Einar one morning, as Helga was propping him up in pillows while he was sitting up in bed to eat his breakfast.

"Oh yes," she answered, pouring the tea from the Japanese tea-pot. "I remember him very well. It seems only a short time since we lost him. He was always so bright, and witty, and pleasant; and then he was so good to mother."

"Have you ever read any of his books in the book-case over there?" continued he, after a moment. He hoped ardently, that she would say "no," but he strove to hide his anxiety under an outward show of indifference. It was incredible that this pure, serene Helga could have any knowledge of evil—that she could have read "Adolphe," or "Mademoiselle Maupin," or "Madame Bovary."

"Yes," she answered, innocently, seating herself on her stool at the bedside. "I have dipped into a few of them, because mother thought there was no use in buying new French books for me when we had so many already. But I don't think I understood them very well, and the doctor gave me some others which I liked better. My brother had been in France, and he knew a great deal more than I do."

Einar felt re-assured, but he became oblivious of his tea, and sat gazing at the dear face with radiant eyes.

"Take care!" she exclaimed, seizing the tea-cup as it was on the point of being upset. "What are you smiling at? Have I been saying anything stupid?"

"Not at all. You have been unknowingly wise, as you always are."

"I hardly know how to interpret that."

"You needn't interpret it. It isn't worth the trouble."

She rested her chin on her hand, and looked at him with a puzzled smile, but made no answer. The flowing sleeve of her loose morning dress, with its dainty white frill along the border, fell in simple folds down to the elbow, showing a faintly flushed, rounded arm of perfect modeling. That a woman of her stately form, with her queenly simplicity of bearing could be at heart so child-like, so adorably unconscious, seemed well-nigh incomprehensible. It was one of those divine enigmas with which the Creator is apt to puzzle poor masculine hearts. And, like every enigma, it had a strange power of fascination. As she sat there silently before him, apparently absorbed in thought, Einar summoned all his philosophy to his aid, and tried, in a half æsthetic fashion, to analyze the impression she made upon him. That she was something vastly above the commonplace,—an absorbing phenomenon beside which every other presence became tame and insignificant,—it required no philosophy to detect. There was a largeness and singleness in the *ensemble* of her outline, a grandeur of form which we are apt to call statuesque, and which needs no small accessories of color to make it impressive. She must herself have been instinctively conscious of this, for she always chose simple objects for her adornment, and refused, either from necessity or from instinct, to wrap herself in the usual filigree of lace, or to hang savage trinkets of gold about her person. The large, pure-cut cameo, with the head of the young Augustus (a precious heirloom in her father's family) which clasped her dress in the throat, carried out this idea to perfection, and rested as lightly and as naturally upon her bosom as a water-lily on the surface of a lake.



There was something so inexpressibly sweet in this subdued monotony of the sick-chamber,—the soft light which stole in through the translucent woof of the curtains, the uninterrupted ticking of the old-fashioned clock in the corner, the half-expressed tenderness implied in many a slight word and act, and Helga's warm presence lending a strange richness to all. I verily believe that there is an Olympus in every human soul, a serene region, high above the strata where struggle, and sorrow, and passion abide; a "region unshaken by storms, where rains never descend, and snow doth not fall." It was in this happy Olympus of their being where Helga and Einar met, as it were, soul to soul, without fear or restraint, only rejoicing like unreflecting children in each other's nearness. The busy turmoil and agitation of life, with its thousand small concerns, with its tyrannical laws cramping the free movement of the soul, reached them but dimly and from afar. To meet Helga's frank gaze, to hear her gentle voice and feel the touch of her hand, all heedless of what the world thought or said—it was one of those rare joys which refuse to be imprisoned in words, one of those absolute moments to which one would fain say with Faust: "Stay! thou art fair."

"Do you remember, Miss Helga," he said one afternoon, as his memory flitted back over the days of their intercourse, "how beautifully you snubbed me the first time I came to call upon you with the doctor?"

He spoke with happy confidence; somehow that time seemed so very remote, and he felt sure that her opinion of him must have undergone a great change since then.

"I remember it well," she answered, smiling. "I was wrong in blaming you because you did not choose to conform to my own idea of you. Your magnificent performance on the organ was still vibrating through my nerves,

and somehow I had made up my mind that you must be a man exalted above the struggles and weaknesses of ordinary mortals. Then afterward it occurred to me that you might interpret my ungracious reception as vexation at having been defeated by you, and that of course irritated me still more. For I assure you I was almost happy at being defeated by you. Even now I am grateful to you for it."

He lay thinking for a moment, but her candor in admitting that he had disappointed her did not touch him unpleasantly.

"Tell me," he went on, "how I impressed you. You were not wrong in rebuking me as you did. It is so rarely one has the opportunity of seeing himself as others see him. And," he added, smiling, "your judgment of me as I was then might help me to a useful self-knowledge."

"I am afraid it is a difficult thing you ask of me," she said, coloring a little. "My judgments are not apt to be very accurate. I have seen very little of the world, you know, and had really no right to make up my mind about you in such haste."

"And still I should be grateful to you if you could have sufficient confidence in me to tell me even that which in your thought was not to my credit."

"Well, since you wish it," she answered, dropping her sewing in her lap and folding her hands, as if to prepare for a complete confidence. "But I shall have to be very candid, and I am still doubtful whether in the end you will thank me."

"Yes, yes. At all events, after what you have said you cannot very well stop, or I shall expect something terrible."

A shadow flitted athwart his transparent features; he turned away, then again faced her with a resolute smile.

"You know I have always had a liking for large things," she began. "And, above all, I thought that men ought to be free from all the pettiness which makes women so often intolerable. I believed that the life of a man—that is, my type of a man—must be a continual march of conquest; that he must take a kind of fierce joy in subduing obstinate circumstances, and compel everything to conform to his own strong purpose."

She was hardly aware that she was in part echoing the doctor's phrases; this had been a constant theme of discussion between them, and he had unknowingly supplied the outward form for her own fervid but dimly shaped yearnings.

"Now, that evening, when we sat together out on the piazza," she continued, after a pause, "you frankly confessed that life was as yet an unsolved problem to you; you said that men were no less controlled by circumstances than women, and that made me impatient with you. I thought that you were a man who on some occasion had been guilty of an unpardonable weakness, and that, instead of blaming yourself for it, you found comfort in the reflection that the world was made all wrong—very much as a woman might have done. But these were all hasty conclusions, and I know now that I was mistaken, for you have shown more strength here in Hardanger——"

Einar's gaze had steadily been gathering intensity as she spoke; he breathed heavily, and great drops of perspiration gathered on his forehead. Helga, who in the earnestness of her confession had been too absorbed in her own words to note the change in him, now suddenly saw the feverish anxiety of his look. She sprang up, leaned over him, and cried out, in a voice of impetuous self-accusation:

"Oh, what have I done? I was very foolish to talk as I did. Dear Mr. Finnson, do not heed my idle words. Forgive me. I know I was wrong. I have known it all the while."

"No, no," he murmured, answering faintly the pressure of her hand. "You were not wrong. It is all true. Ah, you have been my good angel, Helga!"

All the pent-up passion that had been gathering volume within him since the first moment he saw her, was quivering on his lips. A vague dread seized her, and with an instinctive movement, prompted as much by her solicitude for his welfare as for her own, she put her hand upon his lips and whispered beseechingly:

"Hush! hush! You are too weak yet to talk so much. Now be good, and lie quiet. The doctor said you must be very careful. It was all my fault. I forgot that you were not strong yet, only because it was so pleasant to talk with you."

"Ah, no," he whispered painfully, as she removed her hand. "I had neither courage enough to act nor to be wholly inactive. I was miserably weak, and you were right to despise me."

"I did not despise you," she pleaded despairingly. "I know well all that you have done here, and I honor you for it—I honor you—and—I shall always honor you for it," she ended tremblingly.

"Yes, honor me," he sighed mournfully, and closed his eyes.

The door was gently opened and Van Flint entered.

"My dear boy, you are not as well as you were yesterday," said he, placing his hand on Einar's brow. "Miss Helga," he added, with a glance at her agitated face, "allow me to take your place for the rest of to-day."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MRS. NORDERUD'S GARDEN.

JULY had been tolerably even-tempered that year—bright and full of genial strength at first; but as it drew toward its end, from sheer excess of good humor somewhat languid and inclined to doze. I believe this amiable languor of the month,—this warm, golden monotony, made Einar's gradual recovery of health less perceptible to himself and his friends, and made him linger in Mrs. Raven's cottage longer than was strictly necessary. At the end of the third week, however, he obtained the physician's permission to return home, and when Van Flint, although he was, like all good Americans, by nature undemonstrative, saw him standing once more "clothed and in his right mind," in the Icelandic study, he felt a strong impulse to embrace him. His sense of humor, however,—or, rather, his fear of appearing ridiculous,—anticipated the act, and he contented himself with shaking his friend's hands in a slow and emphatic fashion; and afterward, for several days to come, the eccentric doctor would, with the most irrational abruptness, spring up and slap his knee, exclaiming, with beaming countenance, "Well, well, old boy, I am glad you have come back!"

August was even more lavish of her splendor that year than usual. It dashed the doctor's Arctic flower-beds with glowing patches of scarlet and crimson and yellow, invest-

ing the hoary, bloomless Saga-isle with a fervid brilliancy, as if the passionate drama of its history had found a fleeting expression in the tender language of flowers. Along Skarpheddin's war-path his vengeful thoughts had shot up in fiercely flaming gladioles; the sage, cool-headed Njal found his judgments considerably biased by the ardent beauty of phlox and carnations; and the stern Halgerda's wrath was completely smothered in the delicious odors of mignonettes and verbenas. The morning-glories, which had to support their fragile existence on steel wires, were this year seized by a loftier aspiration than usual, and seemed determined to shut the doctor out from all intercourse with outside humanity; but the doctor had happily divined their purpose, and had trailed his wires so as to leave a narrow portal for exit and entrance; and, although it cut him to the heart and was really opposed to his principles, he sometimes at evening, when the young blossoms were curled up softly in rest upon the warm air, pinched off the too luxuriant tendrils about the portal with his fingers, or by dint of much coaxing gave a new bent to their aspirations.

In this shady bower Einar spent the long August days, dozing over the songs of some lotus-eating bard, watching the labor of the humming-birds, as with cheerful unconcern they drank the life-blood of the flowers, or pondering on some device by which he might, without any violent jar, reveal the sad secret of his past to the two beings who, during his sojourn here, had become so dear to him. Many a time, when the doctor returned from the office (for he had been having the sole management of "The Citizen" during his friend's illness) his overcharged heart would cry out for the relief of confession; but somehow the doctor's unsuspecting confidence seemed a precious

boon to Einar, and the very possibility of forfeiting it made him shudder.

But Helga—had not she, too, her secret? Not a very dark one, you would say, yet still one fruitful in unrest and misery. With Einar's departure it was as if the light had gone out of her life—it lay so pale and empty before her now, so purposeless and devoid of meaning. As long as he was with her, and his presence filled the winged hours with a strange, palpitating restlessness; which was not joy, but rather a kind of delicious pain, she had drifted along heedlessly, and, in a truly womanly fashion, dreaded to hear the word which, nevertheless, in the depth of her soul, she yearned to hear. She had even dreaded to admit to herself that she loved him, and had scrupulously closed her ears to those swift, impetuous whispers which in unguarded moments rise from the hidden chamber of the heart. But the whispers grew louder, and with wild flutterings of joy and fear she began to cherish the wondrous thought. The timid apathy which at first she had courted was irrevocably gone; all the forces of her being were roused, and she walked about amid her daily duties in a kind of "tumultuous silence," doing even the most trivial things with a certain dreamy, unseeing ardor, and answering commonplace questions with an intensity which often startled her interlocutor. To a nature like hers, imbued with all the solemn simplicity of the northern blood, a great love was a direct gift from God—something mysterious and sacred, the presence of which she felt with a mingling of tremulous joy and awe. She knew that the great moment of her life had come, and this life itself, which had hitherto appeared so superfluous, accidental in its origin, and in its destinies dark and perplexing, gained suddenly a deeper

significance, and found, as by a miracle, its place in the economy of the world.

Many an evening, when the house was silent, Helga paced restlessly up and down in her room with her hands clasped outward, startling herself by abrupt whispers, which seemed to rise to her lips without any will or purpose of her own. She felt tired, and still intensely awake. She pressed her forehead against the window-pane, and gazed with dimmed vision at the familiar landscape, which lay shrouded in the soft mists of the night. Often the touch of her own hand would feel cold and strange, like that of some other person; and singular, unmeaning fancies would flit through her brain, as if whispered into her ear by some unknown voice. The thought of Ingrid would come to her, at such times, with a warm sense of pity, without bitterness or grief. Her own passion seemed so absolute, that the innocent, girlish enthusiasm of her friend could have no rights beside it. Her former scruples faded away. It was as if the transformation she had undergone had even changed her ideas of right and wrong. But when the daylight came, and Ingrid's eager confidences wrought their way through her intense pre-occupation, the old dread returned, and she often shrank back into a rigid, guilty reserve which was very puzzling to her garrulous little admirer. She would fain have clasped Ingrid in her arms, kissed her and caressed her as in times of old; but that unbending sincerity of hers always restrained her. And what was still more unaccountable, there were moments when Ingrid's guileless prattle jarred cruelly upon her highly strung nerves—moments when her former full-flowing sympathy seemed to have grown torpid, and refused to flow; and then the airy chat of her friend would seem annoyingly



light and frivolous, and a feeling akin to repulsion would overmaster all the tender impulses of her heart. With what vehement self-accusations would she then torture herself, when her little girl was gone! How guilty and fierce and unhappy would she feel, and how hopelessly dark and remote seemed the way out of all these perplexing difficulties!

During the first month, while the passionate struggle was raging within her, Helga looked with a kind of contemptuous impatience at the dull, prosy concerns of the village, whose slowly-pulsing life persisted in its old drowsy routine, as if on purpose to mock her own vain self-consuming intensity. But when that month was at an end, she began once more to yearn for some larger outward activity, and with an avidity peculiar to strong and impulsive souls, she plunged again into her long-neglected charities. It appeared almost like a godsend to her that old Magnus Fisherman, about the middle of August, had a severe attack of pneumonia, and stood greatly in need of her nursing and care.

Saving had never been Magnus's *forte*, and whenever he was ailing, as he usually was, he accepted, from the force of habit, his neighbors', and especially Norderud's, bounty with a cheery indifference, very much as a matter of course, or perhaps even as a right. If the Almighty saw fit to bring him down with the fever, he reasoned it was His lookout how he was to keep soul and body together while the affliction lasted. Helga tried her best to impress upon him that God was not responsible for the ailments which were the results of carelessness and neglect of sanitary rules, but her arguments on such occasions were usually too deep for her auditor's unphilosophical mind, and she would often discover that she left

him, after hours of patient exposition, exactly where she had found him. On one occasion, he had even shocked her seriously when she was endeavoring to solve that knotty problem of the origin of evil, which has indeed baffled the ingenuity of more skilled philosophers than she. She had just reached the point that God, although he was omnipotent and could prevent evil, still allowed it to exist; when the old man, seriously grappling with the novel thought, remarked:

“Pretty darned tough, that is, aint it?”

He was indeed the most hopeless pupil she had ever had. She often despaired of imparting a single religious idea to him, for his droll criticisms were evidently both unconscious and sincere, and he had not the remotest suspicion himself that he was irreverent, and still less that his remarks were capable of a humorous interpretation. He had for many years been in the habit of slipping into church after the service had commenced, and slumbering peacefully in the pew nearest the door; and when the pastor had requested him to enroll himself as a member, he had looked up with a puzzled smile, as if a dark riddle had been propounded to him, and promised to think about it. The request had, on the pastor's part, been repeated annually, and always with the same result. To attend church was, to Magnus's mind, a respectable thing to do, but as for paying anything for the privilege, he would rather be excused. In Norway nobody ever paid for church-going, and folks in Norway were certainly better Christians than their countrymen in Hardanger, “by a darned sight.” It is needless to say that such reasoning was exceedingly irritating to Mr. Falconberg, who, aside from the question of discipline, took very much the same pride in the numerical growth of his church as a farmer

in the increase of his stock, or a merchant in the extension of his trade. In Norway it had been very different. There, Evangelical Lutheranism was an old and established thing, and exalted high above the need of individual patronage. Worldly ambition, there, as far as it entered at all into the mind of the clerical devotee, conceived of the church as a kind of ladder, by which he might mount into eminence. But here, as Mr. Faleonberg once remarked in confidence to a clerical brother, you had to hold on to your ladder and support it, while you attempted to mount. And no one will deny that that is rather a difficult feat.

In this question of Magnus's church-membership, Norderud had once been appealed to, as the man whose voice would be likely to have the greatest weight with the delinquent. But, from Norderud's secular point of view, the case assumed rather a ludicrous aspect, and he could not be persuaded that a soul of Magnus's calibre was of much account, one way or another.

"Let us rather attend to the wants of his body, Mr. Pastor," said he, with that amused air which was habitual with him whenever he spoke of Magnus, "and leave to God the care of his soul. Somehow God did not endow him any too plentifully, and he cannot in all fairness demand much in return. If the old man likes to drop into church of a Sunday, and doze for an hour behind the door, why, very likely that is a sort of worship to him, and may benefit him. And as it certainly does no harm to anybody, I don't see that it is worth our while to make any disturbance about it."

Any one who knows the structure of the ecclesiastical mind will admit that "this lukewarm indifference, hidden under the cloak of charity," must have been peculiarly

exasperating to Mr. Falconberg. No wonder that he swore in his heart never to consult Norderud's opinion in church questions again! The farmer, on the other hand, who had never been much addicted to analyzing other people's feelings, and, like every healthy nature, judged the world fearlessly by his own standard, departed from this interview in an agreeable glow of self-satisfaction. Had he not, in spite of the pastor's supercilious brusqueness, met him with amiability and in a spirit of Christian forbearance. Possibly there was still a pathway open to mutual forgiveness.

But years went by, and the hoped-for reconciliation seemed more remote than ever. In fact, you might as well have attempted to reconcile the North and the South winds. They were made to blow in opposite directions, and when they meet, they cover the earth with disaster. It was the world-old struggle between a rising and a decaying civilization, fought within the narrow arena of two human breasts. If the pastor and Norderud had themselves been capable of taking this lofty view of their animosities, they might, with philosophic coolness, have agreed to differ, and Hardanger would have been spared that grievous scandal which I am soon to relate.

It was perhaps not to be wondered at, that in the course of time the pastor came to look upon Magnus as a living reminder of his hatred of Norderud, and that he took a spiteful pleasure in administering a kick to him, metaphorically speaking, whenever a chance was at hand. Every one, except the victim himself, was well aware for whom these frequent snubs and rebukes were intended, and Mr. Falconberg's popularity suffered much in consequence. In Nils Nyhus's parlance, he flogged the cart,

but meant the mare, and, with their innate love of fair play, the Norsemen all agreed that that was a cowardly proceeding.

When the month of September, without bringing coolness, still had taken the sting out of the heat, Helga might have been seen daily ascending and descending the slope from the town to Magnus's cottage among the decaying stumps of what had once been a majestic forest. There was an eager, heedless grace in her movements as she walked rapidly onward, usually with a basket of food on her arm, and her face shaded by a broad sun-hat tied down with a ribbon over the ears. She was not one of those who, because they are conscious of higher aspirations, look upon the smaller duties of a woman's life as frivolous and beneath their notice. Her instinct in matters of dress was unerring, and Ida Ramsdale used to come and hold solemn consultations with her, both when a new silk dress was to be "plotted" and during the various stages of its progress. Then they measured and tried on, eyed each other critically, tested effects of color, laughed indefinable little laughs of fluttering joy, and indulged in vivid imaginings of the future. It was naturally Ida who took the more active part during these interviews; but Helga was at least sufficiently sympathetic to encourage her in her frivolities; she was, happily, still girlish enough to be startled into an exclamation of delight by a fine combination of colors, by the pearly sheen of satin, or the pietnresque complexity of a new bonnet. Now, however, those times seemed far away, and I am afraid that if Miss Ramsdale had now appealed to her presumable enthusiasm for millinery, she would have found an unanswering void.

Magnus had been growing visibly worse during the last

week; the fever increased, and the congestions became more frequent. Helga had wrought herself up into a state of nervous uneasiness which she sincerely believed to be all for her patient, and she had at last concluded to call upon Mrs. Norderud for assistance. During the early days of the settlement, before the advent of doctors and the more complex diseases, Mrs. Norderud had earned a just fame by her "house-remedies"—that is, simple decoctions of familiar herbs, which were warranted to cure fever, dropsy, and other common ailments. Helga had herself once had occasion to test her skill, and would henceforth far rather have trusted her life to her than to the American doctors, whose antecedents no one knew, and whose unpolished appearance made their medical pretensions appear more than problematic.

It was a bright, beautiful afternoon in September that Helga started for the Norderud mansion, having left Annie Lisbeth in charge of the invalid. The moist meadows along the road-side lay glistening in the sun; light vapors drifted lazily over the unnown rowen, and the air was filled with a damp, earthy odor which affected the sense gratefully. She walked rapidly along the grassy edge of the road, and climbed the slope to the town, quite heedless of the bright-eyed wild flowers which nodded behind her, as the hem of her dress swept over their heads. She crossed the square and hurried up Elm street, being all the while haunted by a vague possibility, half a hope, perhaps, and half a fear. If she met Einar, now, what should she say to him? How should she behave toward him? It seemed incredible that he would no. at once feel the great change which had taken place in her,—that he would not read in her face all the passionate struggle which had filled her life since he had left

her. She knew she had a tell-tale face, and she trembled lest it might betray her.

As she passed the doctor's cottage she could not master the desire to look up over the low hedges. There the doctor, clad in a linen coat of immaculate whiteness, was squatting among his flowers, his countenance distorted with an earnest grin of intense pre-occupation. He was digging with a stick about the root of a rose-tree, and was too intent upon his work to notice the fair young face that was gazing at him over the close-trimmed tops of the hawthorn. Up on the piazza, Helga discerned another figure, dimly outlined through the sparse-leaved woof of the morning-glories. Her heart gave a great leap, and she paused abruptly, as if the vision had burst upon her by surprise. Einar was sitting in a large rocking-chair; the book which he had been reading lay unheeded in his lap, and his head was resting wearily in his palm. There was something in this listless attitude which spoke directly to her heart; a quiver stole over her, and her whole soul went forward with a great yearning toward him. Then the consciousness of her strange position suddenly returned to her, and she was about to hurry on, when the doctor's genial voice came floating toward her, as it were, from far away, soaring above the heads of the flowers.

"Ah, *nobilissima donna*," cried the doctor, rising and wiping the perspiration from his brow. "Pardon my rustic attire. As you see, I was indulging my horticultural propensities, and if you will do me the honor to step in through this gate which leadeth to my kingdom, I shall be happy to place my whole flowery domain at your disposal. Now tell me honestly, did you ever see castor-beans which rivaled these? They are the great event of the season. Mr. Norderud—who is, by the way, turning

yellow and green with envy—pays me a visit every morning before I get up, and has a quiet little rage all to himself down here in the garden. I happened to catch him at it this morning, and he had to admit that his castor-beans were hardly five feet tall yet. But come in, and you may judge for yourself.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” answered the girl, pausing at the gate, which he had hospitably opened before her; “but I really cannot stop. Magnus is a great deal worse, and I dare not leave him any longer than is absolutely necessary.”

“Vain subterfuges, if it please your grace,” retorted he. “Magnus will feel all the better for the breath of summer which will cling to your garments after a stroll among my flower-beds. Really, I cannot allow you to depart,” he added imploringly. “Now be a good girl, and listen for once to the voice of wisdom.”

Helga hesitated for a moment.

“No, no, Doctor,” she said at last hurriedly, “not this time. You ought not to tempt me.”

“Well, then, since you are so obstinate,” he answered, reproachfully. “But you must at all events listen to this. A most extraordinary thing has happened. The Arctic Færoe Isles have been invaded by a hostile army of—caterpillars! Finnsen and I have had our hands full during the last week in protecting the helpless inhabitants against the greed and violence of the enemy. And, as Finnsen is not at all in a combative mood at present, I have had to do all the murdering single-handed. Now, if you were the same Helga I used to know in times of old, you would volunteer to come and help me.”

“Yes, if I was the same young lady of elegant leisure that I was then,” answered she, with an attempt at gayety which sounded strange to her own ears, “you certainly



should not have to ask me twice. But now I must bid you good-bye. My patient will miss me."

"If you cannot wait to get your bouquet, you will find it on the gate-post on your return," cried the doctor after her.

Einar had been watching this little scene with excited interest, from behind his leafy shelter. He was not aware that he had been observed. His first impulse was to rush forward and speak to her. But there was Van Flint. It would not do to meet her in his presence, for the emotion which was palpitating so strongly within him, made him feel certain that he would betray himself. Moreover, had he not made a solemn vow to himself that he would not see her until he had gathered courage to lift the veil from his heart, and show her all that dwelt therein? He had risen for a moment. Now he fell back into the arm-chair, and with a movement of despair, pressed his hand against his forehead. It was well that no one saw him, at least, no one except the morning-glories; but they, like the innocent things that they were, went early to sleep, and probably they did not see him.

The little interview with the doctor had left a subdued, quivering agitation in Helga's mind. She hurried on to her destination, and found Mrs. Norderud in the kitchen garden behind the house. She was standing half hidden among the tall clambering bean-stalks, cutting the long green pods with a pair of scissors, and dropping them into a tin pail which hung on her arm.

As she saw the young girl approaching, she put down the pail on the grass, wiped her right hand on the back of her apron (a habit which her husband had not been able to break her of), and quietly advanced to greet her visitor.

"A rare guest, to be sure," she said, as Helga laid her white hand in hers. "We haven't seen you for a great while, child. What have you been doing?"

The sweet matronly comeliness of Mrs. Norderud's face, with its cheerfully uncritical eyes, was ever a rest and a comfort to every one who was privileged to gaze upon it. As Helga stood looking into those calm, benignant features, she felt a strange rising sensation in her throat, and could with difficulty repress a sob.

"Oh, I have been very, very busy, Mrs. Norderud," she answered in a voice that was scarcely audible. "Old Magnus is very sick, you know, and I am taking care of him."

Mrs. Norderud was walking up the gravel path at the girl's side, listening with a serene, unperturbed countenance, in which sympathetic interest was yet plainly legible. Now and then she stooped down to knock off a caterpillar or a beetle from the tomato vines, or to break off the decaying leaves of a too luxuriant cabbage. But Helga knew too well her housewifely ways to take offense, especially as her attention never wandered, in spite of seeming digressions.

"But, dear child," she said as the girl had finished her account of Magnus's complicated ailments, "it will never do for you to wear yourself out in this way, sitting up nights and taking your meals by snatches, and wading down that street through the mud, and sitting with wet feet all day long, as I know you are doing. You know Nils, my husband, doesn't like to have me help folks with medicines,—not that he wants to deprive them of what little help I can give them. No; God knows there never was a kinder-hearted man living than Nils, my husband, is. But he has his crooked notions, too, as who has not, I

should like to know? And I never knew a man, taking him altogether, better at bottom and straighter every way than he is, God bless him. And now I have been married to him thirty-two years come next Michaelmas, so I am sure I ought to know him by this time. But, as I was saying, he doesn't like to have me give folks medicine, for he has a notion that I am kind of old-fashioned, and likely enough he is right about it. I don't know the American way of doing things, he says, and surely I do not, for I hold on to my old ways, as I learned them at home, and I was too old when we came over to this country to take up with new-fangled notions. But eleven years ago, when Thorarin was down so bad with the fever, and we both sat up night after night, hardly expecting him to live from hour to hour, and no doctor was to be had all the country round, then my remedies were not old-fashioned, and it was his belief at that time, as it is mine, that they saved the boy for us. And if you wish it, child, I will put on my bonnet right away, and go down with you to see old Magnus; and if I can do anything for him, I am sure God will forgive me for not telling Nils, as sure as Nils would forgive me, when he had scolded me a little, if he knew it. And I will go down and watch some night this week when I am done salting down the beans, and to-night I will send one of the girls."

"Thank you, thank you, Mrs. Norderud," exclaimed Hjelga, heartily. "I am sure you can do a great deal more for him than that doctor who talks such bad grammar, and spells 'spoon' with a 'n' and an 'e.'"

Mrs. Norderud smiled her simple Norse smile, showing that in spite of her advanced years, she was not impervious to flattery.

"Sit down and wait for me a moment, while I go and

fetch the beans," she said, pointing to a rustic bench under a large, spreading apple-tree.

Her gentle, restful presence had soothed Helga's excitement, and pushed the memory of her own troubles into the background of her mind. But as she was once more alone, they returned to her with renewed vividness, and she felt an irresistible impulse to weep. The matron busied herself for several minutes among her vegetables, and when she came back, being struck with the haggard expression of the girl's face, she inquired anxiously :

"You are feeling ill, child, are you not? You certainly need looking after yourself, as much as the old man does. Wont you come in and let me make some strong coffee for you?—and perhaps some elder tea,—that might do you good. You go at things in such a headlong way, child, and when you have got something into your head, you don't heed the advice of your elders, as know better than you do."

She had seated herself on the bench, and taken Helga's hand in hers. Her tenderly reproachful tone, even more than the words themselves, which were scarcely heard, melted the chilly numbness which had gathered like an icy crust around the girl's heart. The tears burst forth. She buried her face in Mrs. Norderud's lap, and tried no more to restrain her convulsive sobs.

"Poor child! She is sick and tired," murmured the kind-hearted woman, as if Helga's helpless state made it inadvisable to address her directly. "Some one ought to look after her. If she was my child, I should never allow her to wear herself all out, never getting out of her clothes, and getting a good night's rest,—and going with wet feet, and all for the sake of an old man as hasn't got very long to live, anyway!"

And she sat long, stroking the young girl's hair caressingly, and continuing her soliloquy, enumerating all the things she would have done if Helga had been her own child.

Helga had never known the relief of a real confidence ; and, while her existence had flowed on, forming merely a part of the general monotony which pervades the year, like a damp mist, in our Western villages, she had hardly felt the need of it. But since she had known the deeper sorrows and joys of an all-absorbing passion, her life had gathered a swifter impulse, and with a conscious, half-impatient dignity, held itself aloof from the cold commonplaceness which surrounded her—like a current of a purer liquid which refuses to mingle with water at its common temperature. But now, as she felt Mrs. Norderud's caressing touch on her head, and heard her tender and soothing words, a sense of her utter helplessness came over her, and she yearned to pour out to her all her hidden hopes, and yearnings, and regrets. But alas ! she was Ingrid's mother—it could not be.

## CHAPTER XV.

### MAGNUS'S POSTHUMOUS CAREER.

OLD MAGNUS was dead ; and for several reasons his death became an event of far greater significance in the annals of the settlement of Hardanger than his life had ever been. First it supplied the town with a *bon-mot* ; not a very epigrammatic one I admit, but still rudely expressive as Norse *bon-mots* are apt to be. “ ‘ I will never trouble you again,’ as Magnus said to the Almighty,” is still a favorite saying among the Norsemen in Hardanger.

The origin of this saying was as follows, and I shall try to relate it as reverently as it was uttered by the suppliant himself and told by Helga to Norderud the morning after the old man's death :

Helga had long been endeavoring in vain to impress Magnus with a sense of his own sinfulness and his responsibility before God. He had always resented such insinuations as a reflection upon his good name and character which he could not allow to pass uncontradicted. At last, however, when suffering had subdued his spirit, she had prevailed upon him to pray, and with an earnestness, strangely out of keeping with the seeming flippancy of his words, his untutored soul addressed itself to its Maker with this singular supplication :

“ O Lord,” he said, in a hoarse whisper (for he had hardly breath enough left to speak), “ I have never been

in the habit of troubling you much with my affairs, and if you will help me safely through this straight I don't think I shall ever trouble you again."

The pastor found in this incident a text for a very impressive sermon regarding the incapacity of the worldly mind to comprehend the things that pertain to God and his kingdom. To Helga it always remained a source of distress that she had succeeded so poorly in preparing the old man for the life to come, and she had no sympathy with those who were disposed to make the unhappy incident an occasion for mirth. I am sorry to add that Van Flint and she had quite a serious dispute as to how this "lingering Norse paganism," as he called it, ought properly to be viewed.

Old Magnus's death, however, led to even graver complications than these. Norderud, who had undertaken to defray the expenses of the funeral, had sent the usual notice to the parish clerk, who had again communicated it to the pastor. That gentleman, however, was disposed to view a communication which came indirectly from Norderud, even though it was a mere simple statement of the fact that an old man had died, in the light of a personal affront, and it was with a good deal of vindictive satisfaction that he sat down and wrote the following answer:

PARSONAGE OF THE CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR, }  
HARDANGER, September 20th, 186— }

S. T.

NILS AMUNDSON NORDERUD:

From your note of yesterday addressed to Mr. Halvorson, the parish clerk, I infer that you expect me to officiate at the funeral of the late Magnus Thronndson Haeggstad. It will hardly surprise you when I hereby inform you that I am under no obligation, either legal or moral, to comply with your request, as the deceased was not a member of my congregation.

Secondly, I beg leave to notify you that I shall give positive instructions to the sextons (and in this I am confident the trustees, as a body, will support me) under no circumstances to permit the body of the said Magnus Thronndson Haeggstad to be deposited in the cemetery belonging to the Lutheran Church of Hardanger.

I therefore advise you to apply to a preacher of some one of the numerous sects which infest this place, as I have no doubt that among them you may find some one who is willing to accommodate you.

MARCUS T. FALCONBERG, Minister.

Mr. Falconberg thought this last thrust especially a dexterous one, and chuckled in anticipation of the effect it would have upon his antagonist. He was well aware that Norderud was at heart as staunch a Lutheran as himself, and that rather than have recourse to the "sects" he would bury the dead man himself. He was further aware that Norsemen do not yield to the ancient Athenians in their religious care for the dead, and that, in their opinion, the fate of the departed soul in the hereafter depends largely upon the kind of earth in which his perishable remains are awaiting the sounding of the last trump here below. A hundred harrowing tales had followed them from their old home, of uneasy ghosts who returned with the midnight hour to revisit their earthly haunts, being unable to enter the abode of the blest because their bones rested in unhallowed ground. This subtle texture of intolerance and superstition time is slow to unravel, and enlightened men like Norderud who in the high noonday of public life might be inclined to regard Death, from a Malthusian point of view, as rather a beneficent institution, still in the privacy of their own hearts saw him as the dread old skeleton with the scythe and shuddered at the thought of incurring his displeasure.

Mr. Falconberg had really for once succeeded in giving his enemy a painful shock of surprise. Norderud was



utterly at a loss to know what to do. That the pastor was trying to give him a blow over the dead man's shoulder (supposing that a dead man could lend himself to that attitude) he never for a moment doubted, and this, even more than his own defeat, filled his generous soul with indignation. When his irritation had subsided sufficiently to enable him to weigh the question coolly, he dispatched a messenger to his sons, Knut and Thorarin, in whose good sense and sagacity he had unlimited confidence. In fact, he seldom decided any important issue without hearing their counsel. Amund, Van Flint and Einar were also summoned, and after a long consultation in "The Citizen" office the following plan was agreed upon. During the night the father and the three sons would themselves dig a grave on their own lot in the cemetery, and the next morning, which was a Sunday, they would bring the coffin from the house of the deceased and place it on the edge of the grave. The doctor was to speak to Mr. Falconberg when the service was at an end and lead him across the church-yard to the open grave. Then, in the presence of all the congregation and while the robes of his sacred office might be supposed to hide his small personal resentments, he would hardly have the heart to refuse to throw a handful of earth upon a poor departed sinner.

The mood of autumn had perceptibly deepened. The oaks and maples along the streets and in the neighboring glens began to show dashes of purple and crimson and yellow, a thin, faintly flushed haze hung motionless over the fields, and the heavens dozed in a warm, misty monotony, suffused here and there with tints of more passionate coloring. Although the day was very warm, the Reverend Marcus Falconberg at the appointed hour mounted

the steps to his pulpit with his usual firm, ponderous dignity, and Norderud, who sat in his front pew leaning on the head of his cane in his wonted attitude of sober meditation, will testify that his eloquence could not have been more lustily aggressive if the thermometer had been at zero. He pounded the velvet cushions, which lined the edge of the pulpit, with a certain pugnacious zest as if to give a palpable demonstration of how the enemies of God ought to be dealt with, clenched his fists threateningly and wiped his brow with an utter disregard for his fluted ruff and wristbands which, by the time his eloquence had exhausted itself, had collapsed into a state of disreputable limpness.

When the service was concluded, Van Flint, according to agreement, intercepted the pastor as he started on his homeward way and sauntered leisurely at his side across the cemetery, at the further end of which the parsonage was situated. For, according to Norse belief, the church spreads its peace and blessing over the abodes of the dead, and they therefore always place their burial-ground in its very shadow. Since the town had grown up repeated attempts had been made to induce them to remove it, but they had hitherto clung to the old tradition, and prayers and threats had proved equally unavailing.

"What does that mean?" exclaimed Mr. Falconberg in an irritated tone, as he caught sight of Norderud surrounded by a throng of people. "Is your friend, the demagogue, carrying his political agitations even into the house of God?"

"It is a dead man," responded the doctor, calmly, "waiting to be consigned to the earth."

"Ah!" snarled the pastor, as the crowd fell aside, revealing the black coffin standing at the edge of a grave.

"So you think you have outwitted me, do you? You think I am afraid to defy your honorable partner here in the presence of half the congregation. But you do not know me, sir, you do not know me," and the pastor wheeled around on his heel and marched rapidly in the direction of his house.

"Mr. Falconberg," cried Van Flint in a tone of earnest remonstrance, "I adjure you not to allow your personal animosity to Mr. Nordernd to bias your judgment in so important a matter. Listen to me: it is not to Mr. Nordernd that you yield in this instance—it is to your own sense of duty, to your own conscience, to God."

"Who will presume to instruct me concerning my duties to God and to my own conscience?" answered the pastor, with a sudden explosion of wrath. "The man, I tell you, was *not* my parishioner, and I have nothing to do with him either living or dead."

Nordernd had from his station at the grave followed Van Flint and the pastor with earnest watchfulness. As he became aware that the doctor's mission had failed, he made his way through the crowd and called out:

"Mr. Pastor!"

Mr. Falconberg faced abruptly about.

"What do you wish, sir?" he said, fiercely.

"One moment, with your permission," Nordernd went on in his quiet, respectful way (for the pastor was still in his clerical robes). "I only wanted to beg you to forgive me for having done what may seem to you tricky and not quite the square thing to do. But you see, Mr. Pastor, I had the dead body on my hands, and the weather is hot, and the truth is, I didn't know what else to do."

The church people had now gathered in a dense ring

about the three principal actors, and stood staring with that vague satisfaction which most of us are apt to feel when something unusual is going on, in which our own interests are not directly concerned.

"May I ask you," inquired the minister, with forced composure, "if you did not receive a note from me, in which I gave you my advice as to how you might dispose of the dead body?"

"I could hardly believe that the pastor was in earnest about that. Old Magnus—God have mercy on his soul!—whatever his failings may have been, was of the right faith, and it would be a great sin and shame if I were to dig a hole for him and throw him into it like a dog, away from his countrymen and without having the church-book read over him. It is criminals and folks that take their own lives that are treated in that way, and not Christians. And I may say this, Mr. Pastor, that if you have a grudge against me, as I know you have, it would be well if you would let it be allsquare only for to-day, and then to-morrow you may take it up again where you left it yesterday. But I should never have peace if I was to think that a dead man, who can't defend himself, had to suffer because of the disagreements that are between you and me."

The pastor made a movement of impatience, then thrust his hands into the side pockets of his black robe, and let his eyes wander over the multitude with an air of supreme indifference. He was wondering at his own composure, vaguely admiring it, and more determined than ever to stand his ground. Moreover, he was blind enough to interpret Norderud's respectfulness as humility, arising from the consciousness of having been vanquished. Little did he know how that sturdy, generous soul, with its deep sense of justice, was inwardly boiling with right-

eous indignation, and at that very moment visiting him with its severest condemnation.

For several minutes the silence was oppressive. Every one stood listening to his own heart-beats, and wondering what was to happen. Then the crowd suddenly fell apart, and two women advanced toward the pastor. The one was tall and stately, dressed in somber colors and with a dark veil over her face,—the other, small, plump, and pale, and her eyes were swollen with weeping. It was Helga and Annie Lisbeth, the daughter of the deceased. Mr. Falconberg was suddenly roused. He fell back several steps, and sent Helga a flaming glance, to which she responded with a fierce flash from under her veil.

"Pastor," faltered Annie Lisbeth, while the large tears trickled down her cheeks, "my father—he is dead—he can do no one any harm now. Would you not say a prayer over him—and—and—throw earth upon him?"

A strong movement of sympathy stirred the crowd. There were no more indifferent faces. The doctor, who was as tender-hearted as a woman, turned abruptly away. Several rough coat-sleeves were seen stealing up to the corners of moist blue eyes, and here and there a subdued sob was heard. The simple appeal had melted all hearts—except the pastor's.

"Child," he began in a hard, didactic tone, "you do not know what you ask. I have nothing against your dead father, and would prefer to see him properly buried. But here a principle is involved, and I cannot yield. Do not importune me any more. It is of no avail. And now," he added, turning from the young girl to the congregation, "I wish to say in conclusion, that this should be a warning to those who hang about the church, sharing in its privileges without contributing to its support."

Helga stood listening to these hard, unfeeling words, and she burned with anger. She yearned to give vent to all the tumult which raged within her, but somehow she had a presentiment that she would break down and end, woman's fashion, with a tearful appeal, and this fear checked her eager tongue. So she was content to draw herself up to her full height, imagining that she was in this way giving expression to her mute scorn and defiance. Annie Lisbeth leaned upon her arm, weeping. Mr. Falconberg, noticing the challenging erectness of her attitude, and dreading another scene, moved away as hastily as the dignity of his robes would permit. The crowd broke up into smaller groups, and continued to discuss what had taken place with the ponderous, monosyllabic earnestness of excited Norsemen. Norderud and his sons lifted the coffin once more upon their wagon, and drove home.

During the afternoon, the intense feverish stillness, which was not rest, but rather the forced equilibrium of strong conflicting powers, was suddenly broken, and the world began to draw long, refreshing breaths. Fitful gusts of wind coursed aimlessly through the air, the red, misty bar which ran like a dusty path of flame along the western horizon darkened and grew broader; strange, vague cries, which seemed to come from nowhere, rose heavenward, impressing, as it were, some subtler organ than the outward ear, and a brilliant net-work of lightning illuminated the intervals between the heavy embankments of cloud. In the Norderud mansion, doors and window-shutters were closed, and the bell-handle was wound with black crape. In the sitting-room sat Norderud, tall and solemn, with the large, silver-clasped family Bible lying open on the table before him. He had been reading in the Gospel of Saint

Matthew of how David and his men ate the show-bread, which only the priests were permitted to eat, and still, by the Savior, were accounted blameless. In the middle of the room stood the coffin, supported on six chairs, and around the walls the various members of the family were seated, listening in grave silence to the father's exposition of the Scriptural lesson. Einar, Helga, Van Flint, and Ingrid were all there, but somehow they only saw each other as through a haze. The solemn occasion had pushed all personal emotions, if not into oblivion, then at least into a dimmer, more remote region of consciousness.

There is no need of dwelling on the details of the discussion which followed. The moral of the lesson was plain enough. If David had, in a moment of extreme need, done that which was forbidden, and still been blameless, there would also be forgiveness for those here assembled, if in their distress they departed from the letter of the law, adhering the more reverently to its spirit.

Six hours later, when night had folded the world in her soft cloak of darkness, Norderud, with his tall sons, again emerged from the house, carrying between them the homeless corpse which the earth had refused to receive. They placed the coffin upon the wagon which stood ready at the door. Thorarin took the reins, and the horses slowly moved off. Then came Helga, leaning on Einar's arm (for in the darkness they had felt irresistibly drawn to each other), and the doctor, shyly supporting the sobbing Annie Lisbeth, who, in her helplessness, rested heavily upon him. The heavens were now girded with storm-driven clouds, leaving a broad path-way of blue from the zenith northward, through which some faint stars peeped forth with a timid, uncertain glimmer. Now and then the overcharged batteries of the skies sent forth their swift flashes of flame,

and sullen mutterings in the distance indicated the approaching march of the thunder.

Einar and Helga, it is only just to say, had set out on this midnight expedition without any thought of themselves. They had both been prompted by a generous desire to stand by Norderud, and to share the burden of blame which would fall upon him, when his action should become known. Helga, moreover, had met all her mother's opposition by the argument that Annie Lisbeth needed her presence, that she might not be the only woman among so many men. But no sooner had the darkness closed around them, than she felt a wild tumult of happiness, against which both reason and conscience were helpless. It was the spontaneous reaction of healthy, full-blooded youth against the ascetic restraints which, in her self-subduing ardor, she had imposed upon herself. For a vigorous young soul, if the artificial pressure be but momentarily removed, will bound back into its natural attitude of joyous energy as readily as a bended branch recovers its wonted position. And Helga, with all her large capacity for happiness, had known so little of it. She had only felt it as something dimly divined, which appealed strongly to something kindred in herself, and stirred her with its vague promise. In the world of which she was a part and which was a part of her, and by whose laws, vital or petty, she had unconsciously been governed, every step toward the realization of her supreme wish had been checked by a complication of motives which it was beyond her power to unravel. But here, in this vast void of gloom, she seemed somehow withdrawn from it. Its voices could no longer reach her, and the strong needs and desires of her soul stood before her in their primal nudity. For this great solemnity of the night rouses the primitive man in



all of us. The day too often cripples our most generous resolves by its multitude of motives and counter-motives. Surely large deeds are more easily wrought in the night, —both for good and for evil.

Very little was said as they walked on through the great stillness, clinging to each other with happy heedlessness, each glowing responsively with a supreme trust in the other's love. Had they been alone, it would have been almost easy to him to unlock to her the hidden chamber of his heart, and reveal the mute guilt and agony which had so long struggled for utterance ; and to her, I believe, when the first shock was past, it would have been easy to forgive. In this moment all else seemed small and insignificant, except the great fact that she loved him. And even a grave error would only have changed her attitude toward him in so far as it would have called out a more abundant compassion.

They now paused at the entrance to the church-yard. Nordernd unlocked the gate ; Amund and Thorarin each lighted a torch which they had brought with them, and all the men took hold of the coffin and carried it to the edge of the grave. Amund had handed his torch to Helga, while Einar had seized a rope and assisted the others in lowering the dead down into the earth. But no sooner did Helga feel herself alone than the terror of the situation urged itself upon her. The presence of death, the darkness, and the dread desolation rushed upon her with overwhelming force ; she saw the coffin sinking down—down, and she seemed herself to be sinking with it. It grew dark before her eyes, her hands trembled, and a sudden pallor spread over her countenance. Einar, seeing the wild terror of her face, let go the rope, leaped across the grave, and she fell helplessly into his arms. The

torch dropped from her hand ; the coffin fell, with a hollow thump, down into the deep. Annie Lisbeth gave a shriek of horror. A broad sheet of flame darted across the sky, illuminating the scene for an instant with its weird glare, and again the thick darkness closed about them. But out of the darkness Norderud's voice rose in loud, beseeching tones, calling upon Him who knoweth the heart of man to judge this deed according to the motive which prompted it, even if the deed itself were wrong in His sight ; imploring Him, out of His great compassion, to give His peace which passeth all understanding unto this dead man, whom they had sunk into the earth stealthily at the midnight hour, without priest and without priestly blessing, as though he were a thief and a murderer. The wind broke with fierce whistling through the trees above, and large drops of rain were beginning to fall. Then the men all arose, filled the grave hastily with earth, and hurried homeward. Einar and the doctor had walked on in advance with Hjelga, whom the cold wind and the rain had restored to consciousness.

At the gate of the Norderud mansion they were met by Mrs. Norderud and Ingrid, who were anxiously awaiting their return. Hot coffee—the worthy matron's panacea for all ills, from toothache to an evil conscience—was promptly served ; but gloom had settled on all, and the conversation refused to flow. Each longed for a moment of solitude, to bring clearness into the confused impressions of the night, and Ingrid, who had been making the round of the guest-chambers to see that everything was in order, caused something of a sensation when she announced that the company was at liberty to retire.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### “BANNER” *versus* “CITIZEN.”

PURITANISM was too positive an element in the American civilization to be overcome by any later influences, however strong and enduring. It still pervades our whole continent as a silent force, quenching the glitter of every picturesque new-comer. The vivid colors of national costume are gradually toned down to a demure somberness, and soon utterly vanish. There were no silver brooches of elaborately fantastic design, no scarlet bodices, no red-peaked caps to be seen in Hardanger. The immigrant instinctively felt that these picturesque details of dress alienated him from his fellow-men, and who, with all the pride of nationality, wishes forever to remain a stranger? Moreover, individuality in costume was one of those things which popular opinion in Hardanger least of all tolerated. That period was not very remote when a shirt-collar, even though it were of paper, was supposed to be indicative of aristocratic proclivities and consequent disloyalty to the republic, and when blacked boots and clean cuffs were regarded as a direct challenge to the community. Even in the style of beards, in manners, and in choice of idioms, this same tendency toward democratic uniformity was distinctly perceptible. A certain stoic composure, even in the most exciting situations, was held

to be an indispensable attribute of civic dignity, and violent gestures and exclamations of wonder, unmixed with profanity, were the marks of a neophyte.

An outside observer, judging from this stoic disposition and apathetic demeanor of the community, might have been justified in the conclusion that Emerson was its favorite philosopher, Bryant its poet, and "The Nation" its political gospel. But I am forced to admit that such conclusions would have proved very unsafe—that, as regards its literary tastes, Hardanger, like the house in Scripture which is doomed to fall, was sadly at variance with itself. To the eyes of the Hardanger youth, the flaming show-bills of certain obscure New York weeklies, which covered walls and fences, possessed a baleful fascination, and in the public schools dime novels were often found hidden among the leaves of patriotic "Sixth Readers" and sober-minded text-books on mathematics. Among voting paterfamilias there were of course many, and perhaps a majority, who in public praised the stately dignity of "The Citizen"; but even among these there were some who privately gloated over the feverish rhetoric and scurrilous witticisms which filled the columns of "The Democratic Banner."

There was, however, at this particular time a legitimate reason why even worthy Norse fathers should not entirely ignore the existence of the obnoxious "Banner." The hostility between the two papers, which had of late been growing languid and intermittent, expending itself in veiled thrusts and contemptuous epithets, chiefly of a personal character, had all of a sudden gathered a dramatic force which had quite startled the community. As soon as the darkness had rolled away from the unconsecrated grave in the church-yard, the story of Norderud's daring

deed spread through the village like fire in withered grass. Some asserted that he had read the whole burial-service out of the liturgy, and that Finnson had assumed the rôle of parish clerk, singing the hymn and saying “amen” at the proper places; before long it was even suspected that he had invested himself with the clerical robes, which were kept in the sacristy of the church, and had, in the dead of night, been going through a sort of mock performance, only to gratify his hatred of the pastor. It is needless to say that among those who knew Norderud well, such rumors could find little credence; but among the far larger class of later immigrants, who knew him only as a man who had been more fortunate than they, and vaguely feared him as the representative of dangerous, un-Norwegian ideas, no report seemed too extravagant for belief. No one who does not know the deep-seated reverence of a Norseman’s nature and the affection with which he clings even to the outward ceremonial of the established church, can imagine the horror with which these rumors were received. English conservatism is proverbially a hard and stubborn thing to deal with; but, after all, it is not absolutely fixed and unbending; it is like a dam which wisely regulates the expenditure of national strength, occasionally opening its flood-gates when the pressure is found to be too severe. But Norse conservatism is as rigid, unelastic, unyielding as the primeval granite which was the nation’s cradle; wherefore progress in Norway is rarely the result of individual growth, but rather the inevitable widening of the gulf which separates each new generation from the old. People with national traditions like these are already by nature molded in sympathy with the Puritanic spirit of the New World, and in a land where radicalism of all shades flourishes and liberty is apt to run riot, the Norse

immigration furnishes the sort of ballast which we are especially in need of.

To check the ever-spreading rumors, Norderud inserted in "The Citizen" a very sober paragraph, stating that on the 23d of September, 186— he himself and a few friends (whose names were given) had consigned the mortal remains of the late Magnus Thronson Haeggstad to the earth; that they had done this, forced by circumstances, without the knowledge and consent of the pastor, because the deceased, although not a regular member of Mr. Falconberg's congregation, nevertheless by faith and ancestry belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Whatever blame there might be in the matter he took upon himself solely, as those who with him had participated in the affair had done so only at his request. Nothing could be more neutral in tone and less calculated to stir up bad feeling than this sober-minded announcement, and Norderud did flatter himself that the affair would here be at an end. What made him particularly anxious to bring about this result was the fact that the Republican State Committee had formally requested him to become their candidate for the vacant seat in the state senate, and when he hesitated to accept the nomination had given him many polite assurances that his popularity among his countrymen made him the most available candidate they could put into the field. In his heart of hearts he was quite inclined to coincide in their judgment, but if he was to accept, which he thought not unlikely, it would be disastrous to complicate the campaign by the introduction of side issues which might alienate a large class of voters. Hence, although he never for a moment regretted his course toward the pastor, the less said about the nocturnal funeral the better. For, from a political point of view, the pastor was a very

formidable opponent whom it was well worth an effort to conciliate. And let it argue no blame to Norderud that under this new combined impulse of duty and ambition he began to busy himself with various benevolent schemes which he was confident would meet with the pastor's approval. His charities had always been extensive, but they had hitherto been of a half-clandestine and entirely unofficial character. He hated anything like display, and it made him positively unhappy if anybody came to thank him. Now, however, he was less averse to dispensing his benevolence through the legitimate ecclesiastical channels. But I regret to state that in the present case he was reckoning without his host. The supposed conciliatory paragraph in "*The Citizen*" had had the very opposite effect upon Mr. Falconberg.

"He even dares to challenge me in the face of the whole community," said the irascible prelate, with that angry snarl in his voice which was far more dangerous than his usual tone of loud denunciation. "First, he wantonly profanes the sanctity of my office, and then publicly avows that he did it, flaunting my own powerlessness in my face because in this barbarous country I have no legal means of punishing him."

Nils Nyhus, to whom these words were addressed, had come to sound the pastor's mind in regard to Norderud's participation in the church charities, but his preliminary survey of the field convinced him that the mention of his friend's benevolent intentions was for the moment unadvisable. It would only give his antagonist an advantage which he would not scruple to make use of. Mr. Nyhus therefore retired with the mournful reflection that the world was fast coming to pieces. Between the general government at Washington which tolerated a turn-coat in

the presidential chair and allowed roads and bridges to go to ruin (Mr. Nyhus was still slightly mixed up on the subject of governmental functions), and a church organization ruled by a man who persisted in quarreling with his best parishioners, there was very little which an honest man could contemplate with any degree of satisfaction.

Of course Norderud knew Mr. Falconberg's combative temperament too well to suppose that he would quietly pocket an insult, even though it were an imaginary one. His only wonder was as to what shape his resentment would take. It was therefore something of a relief when the next issue of "The Banner" brought out an article with the expected signature, abundantly sprinkled with Biblical quotations, comparing him to Samson because he had had the seven locks of his strength shorn off by the Philistine harlot of ambition. The article was written in an amusingly supercilious tone and from a strictly pastoral point of view. The writer's only care seemed to be to save Norderud's soul, which he felt convinced was on the broad way to destruction. The burial of Magnus was represented as a shrewd bid for popularity, a demagogic effort, on Norderud's part, to identify himself with the interests of the poor whose only wealth was their vote. He wound up with a devout prayer that God might change the unregenerate heart, forgive the sinner his misdoings, and not visit them, according to His menace, upon the third and fourth generations.

It may seem incredible that any man in the present century could write in this tone, but let any one who believes the above report exaggerated refer to the printed controversies between the two Scandinavian synods of the West and he will find abundant parallels. And Norderud was too well accustomed to that style of literature to be



greatly surprised; although, to be sure, the blood did mount in a fuller current to his head when he saw the interpretation that was put upon the most unselfish act he had performed in all his life. As for submitting meekly to this kind of treatment it never for a moment occurred to him. While, after his fashion, he sat ruminating over the insulting phrases, they seemed to eat like a corrosive acid ever more deeply into his mind. At the end of an hour he was thoroughly roused, determined to vindicate his dignity and to return blow for blow. His wife, who had watched him in sympathetic silence from her seat at the loom, now advanced half timidly to the middle of the room where she paused, waiting for some look of encouragement to permit her to share his trouble.

"You do not look quite like yourself, Nils," she said. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thank you, Karen," he answered, with grave kindness, "you can do nothing."

Norderud was not usually subject to caprices; in his house he was the kindest, most even-tempered man that could well be imagined. This look of brooding solemnity which had so suddenly come over him, therefore filled his wife with apprehension. She had the profoundest respect for the powers of his mind, and was inclined to believe that there never was a man who was so overburdened with important duties as he. It seemed almost like presumption on her part to attempt to fathom or even to understand them. Once, to be sure, in the early days of their marriage, while they were both plain Norse peasants, it had been different. Then he had of his own accord confided to her all his plans and his ever benevolent ambitions, and she had differed from him or assented as her inborn sagacity and practical sense might prompt her.

But it is one of the tragic phases of immigration that it invariably offers ampler conditions for intellectual growth to man than it does to woman. If Nils and Karen Norderud had never left their native land they would have remained in their early bond of equal ignorance; the wife would then have had no sense of an intellectual distance between herself and her husband, no consciousness of some loftier region in his mind which it would be vain for her to attempt to explore. In their case, however, this distance was not really great enough to exclude mutual sympathy, and to open the way for tragic incidents. Their early love was still as vital as ever, and their mutual trust none the less for the tacit admission of a difference in intellectual reach.

Mrs. Norderud's standing remedy for troubles which were too intricate for her own comprehension was to send for Doctor Van Flint, whose wisdom she believed to be second only to that of her husband. So in the present instance she dispatched a messenger to the doctor with the request that "if he would drop in, as it were by accident, she would be greatly obliged to him." The doctor well understood what this injunction meant and with a little genial hypocrisy managed the "accident" to perfection. Norderud's countenance immediately brightened as he entered; he returned his greeting with a familiar nod, and without a word handed him "The Banner."

"That is exactly what I came to talk with you about," said the doctor, throwing himself into an arm-chair and rubbing his spectacles meditatively while he spoke. "It is just what might be expected from that quarter. All that about your soul, however, I think is rather good. Only the snarl of personal anger hisses rather too audibly through his trumpet tones of sacred indignation."

"And what do you think we ought to do?"

"What ought we to do? In the first place we ought no longer shoot with blank cartridges. The pastor handles things in a shockingly ungloved manner; he has himself set the example, and we ought in return to roll up our sleeves and on our side show at least an equal amount of rhetorical energy."

Mrs. Norderud had again resumed her seat at the loom, and occasionally sent the shuttle flying with a feigned air of pre-occupation while at the same time she leaned forward and listened with anxious interest to the conversation.

"There is one thing which troubles me in this matter," began Norderud, after a pause. "I have been requested to accept the Republican nomination for the state senate——"

"Good!" interrupted Van Flint. "That will give a capital start to the paper."

"And you don't think that this controversy will hurt my prospects as a candidate?"

"Not in the least. It will rather infuse fresh life into an otherwise dull campaign."

"You have often told me, Doctor," said Norderud, with a futile effort to suppress a smile (for the doctor's cheerfulness was strangely contagious), "that your policy is to vote for the worst man, as the best means to bring about that crisis which only can regenerate our political system. It is very flattering to me to know that it is probably on the same principle that you are advocating my candidacy."

"My principles are made of very flexible stuff, Mr. Norderud," responded Van Flint, chuckling. "And, moreover, if a man should not have the privilege of entertain-

ing a few inconsistencies in himself, life would be rather a dull affair. Your *toga candida*, to be sure, is quite a virgin garment as yet—has no invisible stains, that I know of, because it has never been worn. But, to be serious, since our Republican statesmen have had an attack of virtue—which is by no means a frequent occurrence—you have really no right to defeat their good intentions by refusing the nomination. Even if you are defeated you will be none the worse for it.”

It was true, the doctor had on several occasions, when Congress had committed an act of more than the average stupidity, pledged himself to the policy of supporting the worst candidate, in order that he might have the satisfaction of seeing “the whole thing going to the devil—the sooner, the better.” He was one of those men who, because they refuse to take a superficially optimistic view of public affairs, get the reputation of being rather unpatriotic; and, curiously enough, he never took the pains in conversation to correct this impression. Nevertheless, he followed public events with the keenest watchfulness, and felt anything which compromised the nation’s honor as if it had been a personal misfortune. He had very decided opinions on the subject of the currency question and civil service reform (in which he anticipated statesmen of a later day), and—what was a continual puzzle to his nearest surroundings—these opinions kept cropping out often, in the doctor’s identical phraseology, in leading newspapers, in the state legislatures, and even in the halls of Congress. The fact was, the doctor kept a very firm hold upon his friends, many of whom occupied important positions in politics and journalism, and through his extensive correspondence he was unweariedly asserting his influence in order to prepare the way for the two meas-

ures of reform which he had most closely at heart. Nor-derud, however, had long ago discovered the key to the enigmas in Van Flint's character, and listened to the contradictions of his alternating moods with unwondering composure, as if the logical link had never for a moment been broken.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE PASTOR HAS AN IDEA.

It was the week before the November elections. Einar was sitting alone in the office, reading a still damp copy of "The Banner," containing the pastor's latest onslaught on Norderud. It was entitled "Slanderous and Lying Insinuations Refuted and a Question Answered"; was divided into nine heads, each containing a distinct charge against the offender, and well fortified with Biblical quotations. The quarrel had been running on for several weeks, and had now reached a degree of acerbity that, if the combatants had been men of southern fervor and susceptibility, would necessarily have led to challenges and sanguinary encounters. The northern nature is cooler, I suppose, and less dramatic, but it still retains the memory of an insult and nurses it with a certain vindictive fondness. Thus the insulting epithets which the pastor had applied to his name kept rankling in Norderud's bosom, and the assailant, who had, on his part, little or nothing to resent, felt, aside from personal considerations, a certain moral obligation to continue the controversy, because he would be doing God a service if he succeeded in making it impossible for Norderud to be a candidate. To this end he busied himself with various ingenious schemes, which certainly must have appeared good in the eyes of Providence, judging by the wholly unexpected manner in

which it played into his hands. It is fortunate that the acts of Providence lend themselves to such a variety of interpretations; at all events, Mr. Falconberg never smote his personal enemies without having the comfortable conviction that the Almighty was on his side. He was really too proud to be a hypocrite—too profoundly impressed with his own grandeur to feel the need of a moral disguise. He was conscious of housing such an abundant store of laudable motives within his capacious breast that even an act which, on the face of it, appeared anything but sublime, was sufficiently sanctioned by the fact that he was its author. And this may, in a measure, account for the unblushing directness with which, in the interview which I am about to relate, he divulged his plans for Norderud's political destruction to the man from whom he had presumably the least possible reason to expect sympathy in such an undertaking.

The hour immediately succeeding dinner was the time when Hardanger usually took its afternoon siesta, and when, consequently, calls were rare at "The Citizen" office. Having finished the reading of the article upon "Slandorous and Lying Insinuations," Einar had lighted a cigar, and was leaning back in his chair, with his legs resting on the corner of the mahogany writing-desk. He was plotting a pungent rejoinder, and was chuckling inwardly at the thought of a certain *naïve* fierceness in the pastor's effusions, which offered beautiful opportunities for ridicule; then suddenly there came a very determined rap on the door, and, to his unutterable surprise, Einar saw in the next moment Mr. Falconberg's massive figure filling the opening. He sprang from his seat, made a bow of slightly exaggerated politeness, and placed a chair for his visitor. The pastor extended his hand, and his nephew

shook it, a little frigidly, perhaps, and with a look of grave, wondering inquiry. He felt sure that his uncle had come on some portentous errand, and a second glance at his face immediately convinced him what it was. With a sort of prophetic dread he had long anticipated the scene which was now impending; but his sanguine trust that the providential arrangement of things would somehow be in accordance with his own wishes, had inclined him to defer it to an indefinite future. The pastor seated himself with pompous deliberateness; for the concavity of his back and the corresponding convexity of his frontal development restrained in his physical being that rashness which not unfrequently characterized his mental movements. His eyes rested on Einar's features with a look which the latter had never observed in them before; it was, as far as he could interpret it, a look of interest mingled with a half paternal severity.

"My visit seems to surprise you," began he, in his splendid sonorous bass. "To be sure, our intercourse has not been very intimate of late,—not what you would expect *inter fratres et amicos*, eh?"

Mr. Falconberg, who piqued himself on his diplomatic tact, thought this rather a dexterous hint, and by way of a smile displayed two magnificent rows of teeth—the effect of which was, however, anything but mirthful.

"I have long ago ceased to wonder, Mr. Pastor," responded Einar, with a vexation which he found it hard to suppress. "Since you have, so to speak, become the right hand of 'The Banner,' nothing can surprise me, not even if you were to offer your left—to me."

His manners toward the pastor had never been conciliatory, and now he gave himself the satisfaction of showing that, come what might, he would have sufficient spirit



left to grapple with it. Mr. Falconberg, unprepared for such a reception, jumped up as suddenly as the amplitude of his person would permit, took a few long strides across the floor, then turned abruptly toward Einar, and, with a glance at the door leading into the next room, said :

“Are we alone?”

“We are.”

“And you will be at leisure for the next hour?”

“Probably; but we may be interrupted.”

The pastor took a step toward the outer door, turned the key, and put it in his pocket.

“Pardon me,” he said, while his eyes rested with a cold, uncomfortable glitter on his interlocutor, “if I take precautions against that possibility. We *must* not be interrupted. The matter I have come to discuss with you is one of the utmost importance.”

If Einar had had any doubt as to the object of his uncle’s visit, that doubt would now have been dispelled. And still, as long as there was the faintest possibility that he might be mistaken, he had clung to that possibility with feverish tenacity. It seemed so hard to believe that God, who had permitted him by patient toil to rebuild his fair name in this new world, should thus suddenly sweep away the well-earned fruits of his labor, and turn him out once more as a wanderer and a vagabond upon the earth. In a swift flash the terribleness of his situation stood before him; the certainty of dishonor staring him in the face, and the sense of the utter futility of all his endeavors, rushed in upon him with a wild, overwhelming force; and the bitterest of all—no longer to meet Helga’s gaze with that sweet consciousness of fellowship and mutual understanding, but to quail before it like a culprit. He had an instinctive conviction that,

with all its generosity, her nature was not without a touch of sternness; to her no compromise with evil was possible; if she were brought face to face with sin, her judgment would, therefore, hardly be a lenient one. Her very uprightness and that singleness of purpose which characterized all her actions would make it next to impossible to explain to her that intricacy of motives which had led him away from the path of right.

With all these bitter thoughts whirling through his head, Einar felt no impulse to remonstrate with the pastor, but could only quietly acquiesce in his preparations for the disclosure.

"My young friend," began Mr. Falconberg in a softer voice, as he drew his chair up to the desk where Einar was sitting, "I should like to preface what I have to say with a few words concerning our personal relations in the past. Let me therefore tell you that you have hitherto, probably without intention, persistently misinterpreted all my actions, and misunderstood the motives which prompted them. But let me say no more of that, as I trust that we shall understand each other better in the future. From the first moment I saw you, I was greatly impressed, not only with your gentlemanly and dignified exterior, but also with your culture and your varied accomplishments. Since you took charge of this paper, your talents, although you were constantly employing them against my interests, have caused me to wonder. This, I thought, is something more than common cleverness, something more than the common volubility of self-confident youth. It is, if I may use the word, closely akin to genius. This led me to the suspicion that you were for some reason or other concealing your real name, and that you possibly belonged to one of the great fami-





"EINAR KNEW IT AT THE FIRST GLANCE."

lies of our native land, in which dignity of presence and strength of intellect have long been transmitted from father to son, as the surest heritage."

These last sentences were pronounced with a solemn emphasis, which could not have failed to impress Einar, even if they had not been uttered in a voice which had the power to rouse the most painful remembrances from that past which he had vainly striven to forget. Moreover, with all their shrewdness of intention, they were not without a certain ring of sincerity. For Mr. Falconberg was profoundly skeptical of genius outside of his own family. If any of his neighbors who had children told him of a precocious act or a clever repartee, he always accepted it as a vague challenge, and never failed to relate an exactly parallel case about his own or his brother's children. It gave him a good deal of satisfaction, therefore, to know that this young man, who had dealt him so many a severe blow, was somehow remotely indebted to him or to his own blood for his very power to do him injury.

"You have nothing to answer," continued he, in the same mild, persuasive bass. "I may be allowed to infer, then, that my suspicions were not altogether unfounded."

Einar ran his fingers nervously through his hair, then rubbed his eyes, as with a desperate effort to clear his mental vision.

"Perhaps," the pastor went on, "you may recognize this name and this handwriting."

He carefully unfolded a letter, and laid it before Einar on the desk. That minute, timid hand, with the small, thin letters so scrupulously dotted, how expressive of the tender, subdued spirit of the writer! Einar knew it at the first glance, and the tears blinded his sight.

"It is my mother's," he whispered, hoarsely, as he caught up the paper and gazed at it with dim, affectionate eyes.

He was well aware that his uncle had nothing beyond his own suspicions whereby to prove his identity—that all rested upon his own confession, and a denial might, in all likelihood, save him from disgrace. But who could hear his mother's appeal, and willfully deny her?

Mr. Falconberg, too, found it incumbent upon him to make some show of emotion. He leaned forward, and laid his arm on his nephew's shoulder.

"I cannot but regret," he said, "that we should have lived so long in each other's presence without knowing each other. Your mother has but recently written me your history and the cause of your exile. From your father I have also had several letters, but he has never referred to you. But if you had applied to me in the first place as a kinsman, instead of assuming a false mask, I should have opened my arms and my heart to receive you, and I might easily have prevented your forming these baleful associations, which, I am afraid, you cannot break without considerable difficulty."

Einar gave a quick glance from his letter to the pastor's face, as if he did not quite comprehend his meaning.

"Of course," continued the prelate with imperturbable confidence, "I take it for granted, that now, recognizing the claims of blood, we shall no longer be divided in our aims, but join hands, as it behooves those whom God has placed in so close a relation to each other. I am willing to let the past be past. I do not condemn you for what you have done, for I know how easy it is to make a misstep and how long and hard is the path of repentance. You may rely upon my silence, which my own self inter-

It would prompt no less than my regard for you. And in return I ask nothing except that you shall break off your connection with Norderud and abandon the editorship of this paper. I have many influential friends, and I will open a new sphere of usefulness for you either here or elsewhere."

Einar looked up once more with a vague sense of alarm, and the dim intensity of feeling which had been laboring within him began to crystallize into two definite alternatives. The choice was evidently still his own. Should he betray those who with noble unselfishness had offered him their hands when he stood on the brink of ruin, strike a compromise with his uncle and continue his former course of concealment and duplicity? Or should he gather all his strength for a final great resolve, bid defiance to the power which, though shrouded in soft words, still hung threateningly over his head, and by a fearless avowal of his past rid himself of the burden which had clung like a damp, sickening vapor to his soul? It may seem strange that this constant consciousness of guilt had not produced a reckless apathy, an indiscriminating bluntness of vision, both toward good and evil. But it must be remembered that that youthful elasticity of spirit which had in the fatal moment made the guilt possible, was in itself a safeguard against permanent prostration. During these uneasy years of mental conflict he had never ceased to yearn for his lost purity, and the ever present thought of her whom he loved had intensified this yearning into an active need, and a burning aspiration. Now was the moment to prove that he was not unworthy of her trust, that the love he bore her was a warm and living love, giving him strength even to renounce her.

With an impetuous movement he sprang up from his seat; the pastor, unprepared for such a demonstration, pushed his chair back and raised his arms in an attitude of defense, as if he were expecting a blow.

"Young man," he cried, "consider well what you do. I know what a hot temper runs in our blood. I am peacefully inclined. If we separate as enemies to-day it is yourself you will have to blame for it."

"Enemies! enemies!" repeated Einar, while a deep inward tremor shook his voice. "What can we be but enemies when you come to insult me with dishonorable offers of peace? Do I not know what dissimulation and concealment and dishonor mean? Ah, I have drunk too deeply of that cup and I know its bitterness. It shall never touch my lips again, so help me God. I do not fear the power I have of my own free will given you over me, and I do not delude myself with any vain hope that you will not use it to the utmost. But I am no child, and still less a coward who would sell his convictions and his friends for the promise of personal safety. You say I have employed my talents against you and your interests. You are right. I have done so, and I shall continue to do so as long as I have an atom of strength left in mind and body. I should like to say that I cherish no resentment against you personally, but I cannot say even that with sincerity. The cause you represent and the means you have taken in furthering it are equally obnoxious to me, and if I have persistently combated them it was because my conscience prompted me to do so, and not because of any outward pressure that may have been brought to bear upon me as editor of this paper."

The pastor, to whom this interview seemed a series of the most unaccountable surprises, needed now no longer an



artificial stimulus to his emotion. His florid complexion had blanched and his breath came and went rapidly. This fledgeling whom he had counted an easy prey, had evidently a considerable sweep of wing and full-grown talons capable of a fierce resistance. And still, angry as he was at being thus foiled in his most benevolent intentions, he could not repress a certain paternal admiration of his nephew's courage, the magnificent unconsciousness of his attitude and the aristocratic elegance of his form. Whatever he had done, there was doubtless the right stuff in him; no number of pseudonyms could disguise the fact that he was a Falconberg.

"My young deluded friend," he said in a tone of pitying superiority, "I will not answer you as you deserve. You still persist in misunderstanding my intentions. It is a very erroneous impression on your part, when you think that I have come here to further some scheme of my own. I have no blot upon my name and need no assistance from others to guard it from dishonor. It was for your own sake that I sought you. You are certainly shrewd enough to see that as soon as your previous history becomes known, as inevitably it will" (here the pastor gave a darkly significant glance at his interlocutor), "your remaining here in the position which you now occupy is an impossibility. I therefore came to open to you a safe path of retreat before it is too late. You are well aware, too, that I have the power to enforce my demand, in case you do not voluntarily accede to it."

These words, spoken in a voice so perfectly gentle, like a velvet-pawed touch hiding the sharp claws within, fell upon Einar's ear with strange oppressive foreboding. A strong revulsion of feeling toward his uncle took possession of him; he rebelled against Providence for having

placed this cold unscrupulous man in so near a relation to him, and having given the key of his fate into his hands. But since the decisive moment now must come, he could easily anticipate him; he would consent to no compromise, which must add to the load which had so long crippled his soul, but by an immediate avowal of his past thwart the triumph of his oppressor.

"I am far from misunderstanding your intentions, Mr. Falconberg," he said with an enforced coolness, in sharp contrast to his former vehemence. "On the contrary, I believe you capable of using every possible means for the accomplishment of your end. But I too have chosen my line of conduct after mature deliberation; and threats are powerless to change it. You know Mr. Norderud has befriended me ever since my arrival here, and I am under deep obligations to him. I could not, therefore, prove unfaithful to him in the present crisis, even if by so doing I could secure temporary safety for myself. And with this understanding let us part. When the inevitable shall come to pass, I may no longer be of any use to him, but I shall at least be guiltless of treachery."

The pastor's long-suppressed anger had now completely overbalanced his lurking generosity. He had come expecting to administer wholesome rebuke and consolation to a penitent transgressor, and instead of that he had himself been put to shame by the superior morality of this high-principled miscreant. The very loyalty of his nephew to his benefactor, and the fineness of his instincts, made him hate him the more. For a moment he struggled between the impulse to resort to muscular arguments and the equally impolitic desire to drown him under a torrent of abusive rhetoric. But as neither was quite accordant with his clerical dignity, he wheeled

round on his heel, burst into a scornful laugh, took the key from his pocket and unlocked the door.

"And this is your last word?" he cried, giving Einar a wrathful glance over his shoulder.

"My last word."

"Then the blame is your own. I have given you warning."

With a mighty slam the door closed behind him and Einar was alone.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AN INTERVIEW.

THERE was one consideration which Einar had neglected to take into account when he brought the pastor's wrath down upon his head, and this neglect was now causing him considerable disquietude. He had regarded it as an easy matter (that is, in point of practicability) to anticipate the pastor in his intended disclosures, but he had forgotten that such disclosures would inevitably affect the prospects of Norderud's election, and probably include him in the martyrdom which he had intended for himself alone. He well knew with what eagerness opposing parties seize upon the merest whisper that may throw discredit upon the name of a rival candidate, and he suffered acutely at the thought that Norderud's friendship for him might thus be made the cause of his political ruin. He had strong grounds for believing that Mr. Falconberg would not babble his precious secret into the ear of chance visitors, but would bring it out with many polysyllabic headings through the columns of "The Banner." Its explosive effect would then be well-nigh incalculable. It would be telegraphed to the Associated Press, and would be trumpeted abroad the next morning by every newspaper in the country. "The Banner" for that week, however, had already appeared, and by the time the next

issue left the press, the election would already have taken place. Not from cowardice, then, but because, as he thought, his duty toward Norderud demanded it, he resolved to defer his confession. "The Citizen," which now published a semi-weekly besides its weekly edition, would appear on Tuesday, the day of the elections, and by delaying the publication until sun-down he could manage to avert from Norderud's head the threatened disaster.

It was with much heart-ache and after a long and passionate struggle that he arrived at this resolution, and as it was built purely upon hypotheses which, however, for the moment carried considerable plausibility, the issue might still in the end be contrary to his expectation.

The next morning, which was a Sunday, Einar rose, after a brief, uneasy slumber, to meet the calamity which had now irrevocably overtaken him. It was a cold, dreary day. A sharp wind whistled through the maples in the garden, now divested of their autumnal splendor, and the dry leaves were whirling in a fantastic dance before the windows. The sun was just sending a momentary gleam through the wide expanse of cloud which darkened the eastern sky, and by its cold light he saw his future opening before him in long barren vistas; no hope to brighten it, no aim beyond its endless monotony—only a vast, desert-like expanse of dreariness and desolation. "To live merely for the sake of living, is the source of all vulgarity," says a German philosopher. But to a sensitive soul who sees this prospect forced upon him, it is the source of the most exquisite refinement of suffering. It requires a heroism of no ordinary kind to face unquailingly the vision of inevitable disgrace, when the means of escape is still possibly in one's own hands. But to Einar the question was now irrevocably closed; in the state of

physical weakness which possessed him, he shrank from re-opening the struggle, even though his victory seemed bitter beyond his power to bear. And he, whose position had compelled him to assume the attitude of a mentor toward his fellow-citizens—ah, that the earth might hide him, so that he might be spared the humiliation of meeting their glances again!

With a feeling of chilliness and a strange sense of numbness in his limbs he descended into the study. The doctor, who usually took his ease on Sunday mornings, was heard marching about on the floor overhead, probably in the process of making his toilet. He was singing an air from a German opera (his voice, by the way, was not well adapted for musical purposes) in an easy, careless way, now rising into the wildest *fortissimos*, then running through the most indescribable *piano* movements and occasionally descending into the sepulchral regions of bass. Einar remained standing at the door listening with a dreamy shudder to his friend's musical diversions; there was to him something positively terrible about it. With a sudden resolution he tore a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote a few words upon it and attached it to the top of the cigar-case, where the doctor would be sure to find it; he then snatched some crackers from the dining-room table and hastened down to the office, where he threw himself on the sofa, having first locked the door on the inside. Here he could at least abandon himself without restraint to his misery without having to meet Van Flint's sympathetic inquiries regarding his health (naturally suggested by his haggard appearance) with hypocritical smiles and evasions. It was no unusual thing for him to take a Sunday tramp out to Lumber Creek, and the doctor, judging from his note, would probably conclude that

he was spending the day with Knut or Thorarin Norderud.

It was not until late in the afternoon, when the exhaustion which always follows in the wake of violent emotions had somehow blunted the edge of his sufferings, that Einar was seen emerging from the Norderud block and sauntering with reckless, uncertain steps, contrasting strangely with his usual elegant erectness, down the leaf-strewn sidewalks of Main street. He felt no longer any pain, except a dull aching in his limbs and a sense of heaviness in his eyes. But, as the cold breeze kept blowing in his face, his thoughts began once more to assume a more definite shape, and he became possessed of a desire to see Helga—a desire which gradually grew into an uncontrollable yearning. He might, perhaps, gather courage to unburden his mind to her; and how much better that she should know the worst from his own lips, rather than from those of his enemies. He had hardly anything to hope, except perhaps a gentler judgment, a milder condemnation. By the time he reached Mrs. Raven's dwelling in Elm street, this resolution to make Helga the sharer of his fatal secret so filled his mind as almost to exclude the vision of the desolate autumnal landscape around him. And his ear, too, was dimmed to outward sounds, and the clear young voice which at that moment mingled with the fitful whistlings of the wind fell with a remote indistinctness upon his sense. But, as he put his hand on the gate to open it, he became suddenly aware of a tall, stately woman standing on the inside and pulling it in the opposite direction. Einar met her gaze with vague bewilderment, and stammered something about his pleasure at seeing her.

"You seem thoroughly preoccupied, Mr. Finnson," said

Helga, in a merry voice. "I suppose it is the elections which have been absorbing your thoughts of late, to the exclusion of your friends. But," she added, suddenly changing into a graver tone, "you look wretched. You are certainly not well. Wont you go in and keep mother company? I am going to see Ingrid, who is ill, and I shall probably spend the night with her."

"No, I thank you," murmured he, while the hope which had for a moment lighted his face suddenly died out of it. "If you will permit me, I would rather accompany you."

"Certainly. Your company is always welcome."

They moved out into the street, while their footsteps rustled through the dry leaves which covered the sidewalks.

"You do not look as happy as I had expected," began Helga, after a pause. "Perhaps you do not feel so sanguine about the elections as most of our countrymen do. Mr. Norderud's chances, I hear, are excellent."

"Yes, I suppose they are. I wish I could be happy on his account."

"Has anything happened?" she asked, with a quick glance of apprehension.

"Yes."

"If you would only allow me to share your unhappiness——"

With a strong impulse of sympathy, the exclamation had rushed to her lips before she had had time to consider it. It had hardly occurred to her that this unaccountable dejection could have any relation to her, and, with her usual unsuspecting frankness, she had perhaps urged him on to the declaration which, for some indefinable reason, she feared as much as she desired it. For a strong, life-absorbing passion has, with all its sweetness, still a remote



element of terror in it. She unconsciously hastened her steps, setting her brow fiercely against the cold blast which whirled about her ears, hushing the loud beatings of her heart. In her blind haste she came very near running against a small, fierce-eyed man in a semi-clerical attire, who had planted himself in the middle of the walk with the evident purpose of intercepting her.

"Madam," he said, in a shrill, piercing voice, 'are you a Christian?'"

"Yes," answered she gravely, meeting his searching look without fear or surprise. "I hope I am."

"And the young gentleman there—is he a Christian?"

"He will answer for himself. Ask him."

Einar was too impatient of this most inopportune interruption to have anything but resentment for the intruder. But as he saw that Helga treated him with respect, he made an effort to conceal his vexation and to answer his questions with becoming dignity.

In spite of the boasted religious liberty in Hardanger, the latitude allowed in matters of faith was very limited. A man might perhaps claim the right to think very much as he pleased, if he only kept his heresies to himself. For the Methodists, being the most powerful religious body in the town, kept a vigilant supervision over public opinion. You might be a Lutheran, or a Presbyterian, or a Baptist, and remain unmolested; but if you were nothing at all, you were the legitimate prey of all these sects, and invited the proselyting ardor of every new minister. And if you resisted all attempts at conversion, you might, in times of exceptional religious excitement, be presented with the alternative between Methodism and tar and feathers. Roman Catholics stood low in the social scale, Catholicism being an equivalent for Irish brogue, an odor of garlic, and

unevangelical manners. Among the other churches (with the exception of the Anglican, which was but slimly represented), it was perfect etiquette to confront a stranger with questions concerning the state of his soul, whether he loved Jesus, enjoyed prayer, and the like.

The small man, whose manners were every moment becoming more aggressive, was not to be dismissed with evasive answers or polite hints to take his leave. He clung to the young girl with the tenacity of a leech, cross-examining both her and her companion on the most vital topics pertaining to this life and the life to come, and accompanying them to the very gate of the Norderud mansion, thus cutting off Einar's last hope of coming to an understanding with Helga before the long-threatened event should perhaps separate them forever. The colporter's faith, although strongly tinged with fanaticism, was evidently sincere and earnest, and Einar owned with shame that the quiet dignity of Helga's demeanor toward him implied a just rebuke to his own impatience. Alas, the opportunity now gone might never return! There seemed to be some dark fatality constantly at play in his life, frustrating all his noblest intentions when they were on the very verge of fulfillment.

"And you will come to see me very soon, wont you?" she said cordially, reaching him her hand as they parted at the gate. "You know I should be so happy if you would allow me to be of any service to you. It grieves me more than I can tell to see you so sad—you, who seemed born only for happiness."

There was to him a terrible irony in these last words. He born for happiness—he, who had been pursued by grievous mischances from the very cradle! Reviewing with many bitter reflections the events of these latter

years, he hastened homeward, and found the doctor the central figure in a gray world of smoke, lighted in its equatorial region by a green-shaded luminary, but otherwise enveloped in primeval gloom.

"*Ecce*," exclaimed the doctor, as he heard the familiar footstep on the floor, for his own near-sightedness and the dense tobacco-smoke prevented him from gaining a clear impression of the face. "Thou whom I had chosen as the comfort of my declining years—*præsidium et dulce decus meum*, as it were—how hast thou returned the love I bore thee? Scouring the country, from the early dawn to the dewy eve, for the sake of one or two paltry votes; with a grinly facetious smile stretching out thy aristocratic hand—*trans pondera*, as Horace has it, or worse—across the dunghill; alas, thou son of the Muses, I pity thee! And how fare our bucolic friends at Lumber Creek?"

"I have not been at Lumber Creek," answered Einar, perhaps a little ill-humoredly, for the doctor's mock solemnity was very annoying. "I have spent the day at the office."

"Exaggerated zeal, my boy. Mere youthful hot-headedness. You will break down under it, get softening of the brain and die, as sure as you live. Pardon the paradox. I am rather in a declamatory mood to-night. I have missed you more than I like to confess. For want of anything better to do, I have been jotting down some notes for an article, which I am burning to communicate to you. I don't know what to call it yet, but it is to be an onslaught on that literary vice which the newspapers call word-painting. As for really fine descriptive epithets, we have never quite reached the standard of the Greeks. The *ανήριδμον γέλασμα* of Æschylus, from which

Byron no doubt borrowed his 'myriad-dimpled deep,' is still unsurpassed. Shakspeare's 'multitudinous sea incarnadine' is certainly very fine; but it hasn't to me quite the ring of the Greek. But our modern poets and poetasters, in their mania for melodious words, have quite forgotten that the value of a word depends entirely upon the degree of completeness with which it expresses the idea or the object to which it owes its origin. Words that thrust themselves upon your attention by their obtrusive fineness are really nothing but literary monstrosities."

When Van Flint was well launched upon a monologue of this order, the alluring sequence of his thoughts absorbed all his attention, and he was not apt to exercise much control over his audience. Einar could therefore hide in the twilight of the sofa, sometimes throwing in an occasional "Yes," "No," "To be sure," and the like, when a rising inflection on the speaker's part indicated an interrogatory pause. Preoccupied as he was with his own misfortunes, he could not suppress a smile at the thought that, of all men, the doctor, who gloried in his rich vocabulary, and whose phrases certainly at times were "obtrusively fine," should write an article denouncing his fellow-sinners.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "THE BANNER" MAKES A SENSATION.

THE next morning—it was the day preceding the election—the wind had subsided and the still maples lifted their bare crowns against the clear, cloudless sky. And yet, as Einar trod his wonted way to the office, through the long, bleak avenues, there was, as he thought, a strange quiver of excitement in the air. It might be due to the impending election, which is notably the most momentous event of the year in the drowsy annals of a country community; but somehow this explanation hardly seemed satisfactory. As he approached the public square the conviction grew intenser with him that something unusual had happened. At the opposite corner, outside the office of "The Banner," a crowd of people had gathered,—mostly loafers, and laborers in corduroy and fustian,—and now and then a voice, rising in angry tones above the rest, was flung toward him, followed by a chorus of jeering, hooting and laughter. A large canvas bulletin depended from the windows of "The Banner" office, covering nearly half the front of the building. He only read the words, "Extra Edition of 'The Banner'—A Villain Unmasked." He needed no further assurance; the crisis had come; his conscientious devices had been in vain; he was ruined.

That aggressive courage which rushes headlong into

danger had never been his. He shrank from contact with rude, violent men, and no amount of excitement or passion could conquer this natural impulse with him to seek safety from physical indignities. But, for all that, he was anything but a coward. The pastor would probably in an excess of wrath, have thought nothing of receiving, and still less of giving, a blow; but in a question of right and wrong (that is, where the profit was on the side of Mammon) he had at times consented to a compromise which the tenderer conscience of his nephew would have spurned. And when in spite of this, the former could point to a stainless public record, while the latter writhed with the secret sense of guilt, it was, no doubt, owing to the fact that in the critical moment of his life, this native dread of violence had asserted itself, at the expense of his nobler impulses.

As he stood there at the corner of the square, pale and trembling, gazing with dimmed eyes at the fateful bulletin, he would certainly have aroused compassion in the stoniest breast. With a violent effort he tore himself away, and started with rapid steps toward the Norderud block. The earth billowed under his feet, and the blood rushed with a deafening, surging motion in his ears. He was fortunate enough to reach the office without being observed by any but a few apathetic shop-keepers, who were unfastening the shutters from their front windows. He had hardly had time to fling himself down in his chair when the messenger entered and placed a damp half-sheet of "The Banner" on the desk before him. He clutched it between his trembling fingers and began to read the headings, which were printed with a variety of big type, and covered nearly the whole of the first column. They ran as follows: "Startling Revelations—A Villain Un-

masked—The Republican Candidate for the Senate Strongly Compromised—Birds of a Feather Flock Together—A Marvelous Story of Crime and Successful Concealment—The Swindler Rises to Honor and Dignity—He Disguises Himself Under a False Name—Vengeance Overtakes Him at Last—The Scandinavian Populace Enraged—A Hint to Norwegian Voters."

He could read no more. His head swam. He hid his face in his hands, and strove hard to collect his thoughts. His lips were dry and feverish, and a cold shiver shook his frame. With an effort he roused himself, wrung his hands until his fingers cracked in their joints, and rose to drink a glass of water. As he staggered into the next room, where a small mirror hung over the wash-basin, he saw a ghastly reflection of himself, pale, haggard, with bloodshot eyes and a strange strained expression about the mouth. With horror he shrank back from the phantom-like image—it was as if he had seen himself dead. A long-forgotten dream of his childhood suddenly rushed through his brain. He had entered a large, empty room, at the further end of which stood a black coffin, where a corpse lay with shrouded face. An irresistible impulse had compelled him to lift the shroud, and he had seen his own face, with blue lips and dead, sunken eyes. The nameless dread which had then overmastered him now returned with renewed vividness. He sank down upon the sofa, and thought and felt no more.

Presently a great noise in the next room pierced through his torpid sense. He strove to rise, but his limbs seemed feelingless and benumbed. Some one grasped him hard by the arm, and opening his eyes he saw Norderud and Van Flint bending down over him, both with the traces of unusual excitement in their features.

"Great heavens!" cried the doctor. "He is mortally ill. He has worked himself to death, and now this damnable affair in the bargain. It is enough to kill any man. I told him so yesterday. I warned him to take care of himself."

"Wait one moment," responded Norderud, while the doctor seated himself on the sofa, and raised Einar in his arms. "I believe there is some brandy in this closet. It may only be a fainting-fit, and a stimulant may restore him."

The stimulant was administered, and in half an hour Einar was once more at the editorial desk.

"This is a devilish trick they have played us," said Norderud, pounding the floor with his cane to give vent to his vexation. "We must have an extra of the paper out before sundown, or the chances of the election are hopelessly ruined. Since Finnson is rather low, we shall have to depend upon you, doctor, as usual. It isn't the first time you have helped us out of a bad scrape. But I hope you are strong enough," he added, turning to Einar, "to write a brief refutation, over your own name, of that damnable campaign lie."

There was a pause, which seemed the more intense for the excited expectancy with which both men watched the struggle which for a moment distorted Einar's countenance.

"I cannot."

He almost thrust the words out, as if they cost him a terrible physical exertion.

"You can't!" cried Norderud, springing up from his chair.

"No, I cannot."

"And why can't you?"



"Because it is all true," came in a low, painful whisper.

Norderud stood horror-stricken. His large, ruddy face blanched, and his lips moved nervously, but brought forth no sound. The doctor, having rapidly recovered himself from the first shock of surprise, was disposed to believe that they were all the victims of some cruel misunderstanding, and his features assumed an expression of good-natured bewilderment.

"Mr. Norderud," he said, laying his hand pacifyingly upon the latter's arm, "do not act rashly. It will all be cleared up, if you will only give him time. Remember he is ill, and hardly knows what he is saying."

The farmer tore himself loose from the doctor's grasp, and darted a savage glance at the stooping figure before him.

"If you have anything to say," he said, hoarsely, "then say it."

"I have nothing to say," responded Einar, calmly. "I have told you the truth."

Now that all was lost, what had he to fear? He began to feel his bodily weakness as something unworthy of him, and with a strong effort of will succeeded in rousing himself.

"And you came here, then," Norderud went on, with growing excitement, "with the deliberate purpose of imposing upon me, to drag me down into the dirt——"

"My dear Mr. Norderud," interposed the peaceful Van Flint, "do me the favor to leave this affair to me. I will talk it over with Finnson, and tell you the result. I know I can appeal to your sense of justice; angry abuse will never bring the truth to light, and you will regret to-morrow what your indignation may prompt you to say to-day."

The farmer paused in his vehement speech, and stood for a moment in silent conflict with himself. Then, as if utterly foiled, he threw himself down on the sofa, thrust both his hands deeply into his pockets and said:

"Well, I suppose I am to be counted out of this business. Talk all you have a mind to, and be sure you handle him with gloves on, as he has doubtless deserved."

The doctor, interpreting his acquiescence by his manner rather than by his words, drew Einar gently into the next room and closed the door.

"My dear boy," he said, affectionately, as soon as they were seated opposite each other, "there is evidently something you have been concealing from me all this while. I am sorry you have not trusted me enough to allow me to bear the burden which you have so long borne alone. I have often noticed that you shrank from speaking of your life at home, and I have guessed, too, that there was some painful memory in your past which you were striving to hush. I should not like to appear importunate, and therefore I have hitherto forborne questioning you. But now, since there can no longer be any cause for secrecy, I must ask you to speak frankly and without reserve to me. I have not read 'The Banner,' not even the bulletin board, which I purposely avoided seeing, because I wished to hear your own account of it, before I listened to the exaggerated and perverted versions of those who have reason to fear you."

Deeply touched at this friendly generosity, Einar began to speak, but his emotion often came near choking his voice. After all the din and excitement of these last days, with their restlessness, mortification, and keen reproach, it was sweet to escape into the serene sunshine of Van Flint's affectionate, uncritical eyes. He could speak

now fearlessly of that past which had cast its oppressive gloom upon his present life, crippling his energies and blighting his fairest hope. And he experienced a sense of deliverance, almost akin to happiness, in being now able to rid himself of a life-long burden.

He spoke without restraint of the circumstances which had led to the fatal deed, dwelling with retrospective tenderness upon his mother's timid indulgence of her favorite child, but touching only in the lightest possible manner upon his father's imperious dictation regarding his course of study and his future calling. His evident disinclination to shield himself, however, enabled the doctor to draw his inferences regarding things which were treated as casual or passed over in silence. There was something so warm and cheering in the sympathy of this tender-hearted man that Einar could not but wonder that he had so long resisted his desire to confide in him.

An hour after noon the door was unlocked, and as the square was almost deserted, they ventured forth into the open air. Fearing to attract attention, they chose an unfrequented street, and reached home just as Miss Van Flint's dinner-bell was frightening the robins away from the withered morning-glory vines around the front piazza.

Einar's plans for the future were as yet undetermined, but his friend was inclined to think that the most prudent course would be to leave Hardanger, at least temporarily, until the popular excitement consequent upon the election should have abated. In the meanwhile he would consult Norderud, and bring back answer before night.

## CHAPTER XX.

### HELGA MAKES A DISCOVERY.

It was the day for Helga's charitable society to meet. She had been busy since the early morning cutting pieces of flannel and cotton cloth, so that everything might be in order when Ingrid and Miss Ramsdale should come. In her half-rural retirement, she knew little of what went on about her, and having seen no visitors that day, she was as yet ignorant of the event which agitated the rest of the community. As the old Norwegian clock on the stairs struck three, Ingrid appeared at the door, looking a little paler than usual, and with eyes which showed marks of recent weeping.

"What is it, dear?" asked Helga, to whom such symptoms in her friend were in no way surprising. Some little thing had gone wrong, probably, and she should have to play her accustomed part as comforter.

"Isn't it dreadful?" exclaimed Ingrid, dropping down into a chair, and making no signs to remove her hat and cloak.

"What is dreadful, dear?"

"About Finnson. Haven't you heard?"

"Finnson!" cried Helga, with sudden alarm. "Has anything happened to him?"

She well remembered Einar's deep dejection at their

last meeting, and feared that he had laid violent hands on himself.

"Speak, Ingrid!" she gasped. "What is it?"

"What is it?" repeated Ingrid, in a tone of mingled indignation and sorrow. "Why, it is this, that he is an escaped forger. His name isn't Finnson at all. It is a false name. He is a regular runaway criminal. Oh, dear! What will people think of me—I who have been so much with him. I never, never shall forgive him!" Here she broke down utterly, venting her small, selfish grief in vehement sobs, and hiding her face in her tiny, gloved hands.

But Helga had no sympathy to offer. She stood rigidly aloof, clutching with a convulsive grasp the chair against which she was leaning. Where everything was dark and bewildering, it seemed a relief to lay hold of some palpable thing to fix the wandering sense. A hundred half-formed impulses dashed through her head, but being based upon the belief in his guilt, were swiftly rejected as unworthy of her and of him. Whatever might be the proofs against him, her heart utterly refused to believe him guilty. Presently Miss Ramsdale entered, gay, alert, and eager as ever, but readily recognizing the source of Helga's and Ingrid's distress, she charitably forbore to introduce the topic which she was nevertheless itching to discuss.

"Oh, dear!" said Ingrid, rising from her stooping position with a petulant pout on her round, baby face. "There now! I have spoiled my new gloves by crying on them. And I have broken the feather on my hat, too," she added, carefully removing the latter article with an air which betrayed an intense consciousness of her back hair.

"Never mind, dear," said Ida Ramsdale, eager to mani-

fest her sympathy. "You know I have a knack for curing decrepit *chapeaux*. That feather can easily be amputated, and I will fix it for you in a minute. It will hardly be an inch shorter than it was before."

And so the gossip ran on pleasantly between these two airy-minded creatures, while they fitted shoulder-pieces, each using the other as a lay figure, stitching them together with pins, which you expected them every minute to swallow. For some instinctive reason, which they both felt to be imperative, they seldom appealed directly to Helga's verdict, but with consummate tact still guarded against the appearance of excluding her from their conversation. And Helga, feeling the futility of any effort to appear unconcerned, sat dumbly plying her needle, still crying out mentally against the social tyranny which compelled her to feign an interest in petty things while the supreme yearnings of her soul were crushed into rebellious silence. She seemed to see Einar's face lifted to her in mute, appealing misery, and her heart leaped out toward him with impetuous pity, longing to assure him in word and deed that even though all the world condemned him, she still believed him to have been upright and faithful. The three hours until supper seemed almost unending, and by the time the clock announced the welcome hour, she had wrought herself up into a state of nervous restlessness which threatened to break the bonds of conventional propriety. She managed to restrain herself, however, until the two girls had taken their leave, and even went through a feint of keeping her mother company at the tea-table. The old lady, who was not remarkable for acuteness of vision, and, moreover, accepted her daughter's strangeness as a long-established fact, no longer worth puzzling about, chatted incessantly about the folly of troubling one's self

about other people's wants as long as one had a roof over one's own head, and clothes to cover one's back. Helga well knew that these remarks were always in order after the adjournment of the sewing society, or when she returned from a charitable errand, and she was now even less inclined than ever to rehearse her oft-repeated answers. Mrs. Raven was, in a general way, greatly impressed with her daughter's excellence, and although assuming an unsympathetic attitude toward her charities, nevertheless was fond of gossiping admiringly about them to neighbors and visitors. She stood, moreover, vaguely in awe of her, as weaker persons are apt to do toward those of superior moral strength, and if she had any adverse criticism to offer, she never advanced it directly, but rather discoursed reprovingly about the follies of people in general. Even if their mutual relation had not in part outwardly defined their conduct toward each other, they had at least lived long enough together to avoid clashing; but the daughter's habitual independence of action was probably more than half due to the fact that she had never found sympathy at home.

When the brief meal was at an end, Helga rose with quiet resolution, put on her hat and shawl, and moved toward the door.

"I shall be gone for an hour or two, mother," said she; "and if I am not back by nine, you needn't sit up for me."

"Very well, child," responded Mrs. Raven whiningly. "You know best what you want. But if your poor brother had been alive, I shouldn't have to spend these long evenings alone."

Mrs. Raven might perhaps have forgotten that the lamented Gustav had never cheapened the value of his

company by dispensing it too lavishly ; but the halo which now surrounded his memory had caused this and many other failings to pass into the diametrically opposite virtues.

Helga gave her mother a regretful glance, then with an impulsive movement put her arms round her neck and kissed her wrinkled forehead. As she stepped out into the gathering dusk, the confused doubt and anguish of pain which had tortured her during the afternoon began slowly to give way to a serene trust in that Providence which she felt sure watched over his fate as well as hers, and would safely guide their feet out of that dark labyrinth in which their error and fatal blindness had so cruelly entangled them. She could not think of her own lot apart from his, and it was with a feeling akin to exultation that she rehearsed to herself Ingrid's unconscious confession, which had removed her last misgiving from her mind, giving her now the sole right to share his misery, and if he had erred (if so, she doubted not it was in a generous way), to lead him back to the path of righteousness. In the emptiness of her existence she had long yearned for some consecrating mission,—some noble sacrifice, to lift her life out of that narrow round of small needs and cares which drags the lives of most women so hopelessly earthward. She knew now that her prayer had been heard, and with this grand aim before her, she felt strong enough to defy the heartless judgment of the world, being conscious even of a fierce satisfaction in the anticipation of its condemnation.

Doctor Van Flint, who, by reason of an unusual accumulation of annoyances, was in an agitated frame of mind, was wandering about restlessly amid the scenes of his Arctic geography, when he saw a well-known form



rising out of the dusk and rapidly approaching his front piazza. The fact that Einar had absented himself in an unaccountable fashion during the afternoon, and had not yet returned, had given him great uneasiness. The servant-maid had stated that she had seen him marching up across the fields toward the glen, which under ordinary circumstances would have been natural enough, but in the light of the events of the morning was not quite re-assuring. The appearance of Helga upon the scene was therefore a most welcome relief; if for no other reason, because her presmable anxiety about Einar would offer him an excuse for pouring out the tale of his woes. He was, indeed, too preoccupied with his forebodings to reflect that there was anything extraordinary in the fact of her visiting him alone at this hour of the day.

"Ah, Miss Helga," he cried, as soon as she came into view. "You are a veritable God-send, now as ever. How could you divine that, of all persons in the world, you were the one I especially wanted to see?"

"I came to ask you about Mr. Finnson," said Helga simply. "Is he here?"

"No; that is the very deuce of it," answered he, ruthlessly decapitating an aster which lifted its purple head above the grass border. "I wish to heaven he was!"

"And do you know where he is?" asked the girl hurriedly, and with an undisguised anxiety which went to the doctor's heart.

"No, not exactly. He was seen this afternoon taking the road up toward the glen. To tell the truth, I feel greatly inclined to go in search of him."

"Oh, let me go with you!" she cried, with a sudden helpless energy. She had striven hard to keep her voice steady; but there was still an alarming quiver in it.

Her former dread again came over her, and her confident strength was rapidly ebbing away.

"With all my heart," responded Van Flint cordially. "But I warn you the road is rough. Will you take my arm?"

She grasped his proffered arm with an alacrity which he was not slow to interpret; and without another word they walked toward the back gate, which opened upon a broad stretch of field rising steeply toward the rocky elevation on the west.

The doctor had always cherished a most cordial regard for Helga, and had even at times persuaded himself that he was mildly in love with her. But, as he had never perceived in her any symptoms which his modest self-depreciation had permitted him to interpret as a response to his feelings, he had of late come to look upon his admiration of her as an amiable eccentricity, which, after all, was insufficient to found any serious relation upon. Moreover, he had persuaded himself that matrimony would present a formidable obstacle to the accomplishment of his one great aim in life—the completion of his "*History of Icelandic Literature*"; and he had never been able to make up his mind that even his affection for Helga was strong enough to reconcile him to such an interference. And I must do this generous scholar the justice to add that at this moment, in spite of his dangerous proximity to the object of his adoration, he was too sincerely alarmed about the fate of his friend to indulge in regretful reflections as to what might have been.

So they trudged bravely on, each too intensely absorbed in their common dread to find relief in its expression. For a word once spoken becomes, as it were, an independent existence—almost a reality, which, instead of easing

the mind anxious for self-refutation, may rather deepen its dread.

The slim crescent of the moon floated along the eastern horizon, pouring forth no profusion of light, but still remotely pervading the atmosphere with its softly luminous presence. The larger planets shone with a misty halo, while the unseen myriads of the heavens were but indistinctly defined through the gauzy woof of cloud which radiated from the zenith downward like a vast ærial cobweb. The fields, already nipped by the autumn frost, showed a long bleak stretch of neutral brown, shading, where a rising hillock caught the hazy moon-rays, into a ghostly, bloodless green.

After a steady march of half an hour, Helga and the doctor entered a broad ravine, which had always been one of Einar's favorite haunts. The still, bleak walls of rock rose in moonlit, misty silence on either hand, and somewhere beyond those dark recesses among the pines there was a sound of falling waters—not the strong, deafening boom of mighty liquid masses, but a subdued, rhythmic rush, like that of the wind through dense, leafy crowns. Down in the bottom of the gorge the water broke into a pleasant, contented gurgle; but, suddenly checking its chatty mood, expanded into a dark pool, which cheated the eye with the suggestion of immeasurable depth. Here the beaten path came to an abrupt end, pointing by half a dozen vaguely-defined trails into dusky jungles and copses. The wanderers paused and looked inquiringly at each other, doubtful whether to penetrate any further.

“Suppose I shout?” suggested the doctor.

“Wait a moment,” demanded Helga, in a whisper. “Isn't that a man sitting on that stone on the other side of the pool?”

"To be sure," rejoined Van Flint joyously ; then with a lusty shout : "Hallo, old boy ! What the dence are you sitting and moping over in that stone-heap for ? What startling propensities you are daily developing ! But if you wish to preserve your incognito, that white hat of yours is rather an injudicious article to wear."

There was a slight noise of rolling stones and creaking branches ; then a voice came faintly across the water.

"Is it you, Doctor ?"

"Who else should it be ? Who but me, I should like to know, would start out on a wild-goose chase for you, at this time of night, with the danger of breaking every bone in his body ? No, sir, don't delude yourself ; such devotion abides nowhere but in me."

The doctor could afford to be jovial now ; the sudden removal of the strain upon its mind made it rebound with excessive energy into his habitual humor. He turned a radiant face upon Helga, and gave her arm a little private pressure, implying a delicious sense of mutual understanding. She, however, was still quivering with agitation, and could make but a feeble response.

"I am sorry if you were anxious about me," the voice beyond the water continued. "I was hardly worth fretting about."

"That is a self-evident truth, my boy. Nevertheless, some people are so queerly constructed that they frequently do what is hardly worth the doing. But if you wouldn't mind the trouble, I should venture to suggest that you assume a more tangible existence, as soon as practicable. In my present mood voices from space and that sort of thing do not impress me pleasantly."

"I am coming. It is darker than I supposed. I shall be with you in a minute."

The stones rattled down over the slope once more and the leafless tops of the underbrush swayed in the air. Helga clung with a desperate grasp to the doctor's arm, and clenched her teeth tightly as if by some physical exertion to master the tremor which was irresistibly stealing over her. There he stood, tall and beautiful as ever. On seeing her he fell back with a subdued exclamation, then again came forward and with a look of fervid gratitude seized the hand which was hanging listlessly at her side and held it long within his. She would fain have said something to explain the cause of her coming, but she felt sure that she would betray an emotion which in the doctor's presence would be embarrassing.

"Aha, you precious somnambulist," broke forth Van Flint, who for some reason thought it incumbent upon him to appear merrier than he felt. "With what feat of knight-errantry are you going to surprise us the next time? It would be desirable if you would give us notice beforehand, so that we may know what to expect. You seem surprised yourself, it appears. And well you may. Here Miss Helga and I have been risking our valuable lives merely for the sake of ascertaining whether we might still count you among the number of the living. With me, I confess, it was merely a statistical interest, as I shall have to report the condition of my household to the census-taker within a few days. As for Miss Helga, she will have to answer for herself."

"I am very, very sorry," murmured Einar, sadly.

"But since I have trudged this mile and a half at this time of night," the irrepressible doctor went on, "I want to repay myself by catching a glimpse of the falls by moonlight. I have heard people say that the effect is something quite unique. Miss Helga, I fear, is too tired

to follow, and if she has no objection I will leave her here in your charge till I return."

And with this hollow device the doctor started off at a cheerful trot and vanished in the mist of the inner ravine. Hjelga and Einar stood for a while gazing at each other in amazed silence.

"It was very kind of you to come," he began at last with a slight embarrassment in his manner. I have been thinking of you all day, but I never dared to hope to see you again."

"I heard that they were unkind to you," she answered (strive as she might she could not raise her voice above a whisper). "I could not bear to think that you were unhappy. I know they have been saying horrible things about you and that you must feel it very keenly. But I wish to tell you that whatever they say about you, you will still be the same to me,—I—I shall always believe in you."

There was a painful pause, during which the tumult of her heart became almost unbearable.

"But suppose I was not worthy of your trust?" came at last in a hoarse undertone.

"Oh, I will not believe it. I cannot believe it," she cried, as if determined to refute him in spite of himself. "I could not have trusted in you so long if I had not felt that you were good and true. Why do you say such dreadful things to me? It is not kind of you to treat me so."

She sank down upon the damp moss and hid her face in her hands.

"Ah, Mr. Finnson," she continued, struggling to smother the rising sobs. "There has been so little in my life worth believing in, and I cannot afford to lose my

faith in you. But since you have yourself raised the doubt, which was so far from me a moment ago, you must now yourself dispel it. Tell me that your life has been pure and good, and that there is not a word of truth in what they have told me. You know I believe you. Only say it,—it is so easy for you to say it.”

“O Helga,” he broke forth, falling upon his knees before her, “I would give my life to say it. But I cannot.”

“Oh, how cruel!” she murmured, while the sobs shook her stooping form.

There was something deeply moving in the sight of this calm, strong Helga weeping, and weeping for his sake. It stirred the deepest fibers within him,—moved him with sorrow, self-pity, remorse and still with an uncontrollable exultation in the assurance that she loved him. He could have thrown himself down at her feet and cried out against himself for having wrecked this one fair hope, this one inspiring purpose which still had made his life worth having. But now that the hope was irrevocably gone, now that she must despise him, and a life-long separation was inevitable, the impulse to justify himself in her sight rose above all other needs, and with renewed fervor his voice rose out of the moonlit dusk.

“It is this and this only, Helga, which has so long kept me away from you. I have suffered for your sake—ah, God only knows how I have suffered! I would not thrust my soiled life into yours which was pure. And still what I did, though it may appear black now, was not the cunning, deliberate fraud that it has been represented to be, but a hasty, reckless choosing between two impending evils. I was weak—momentarily weak, and chose the greater evil instead of the lesser. I came here hoping by patient toil and honesty to blot out the stain upon my

name, and a hundred times I resolved to reveal my past to you, but once you checked me yourself, and since then some fatal mischance always frustrated my purpose whenever it grew strong within me. And now, since we are once for all separated, I may at least speak to you without restraint, and you will not think me ungenerous for confessing the love which has been my hope and my life ever since the first moment I saw you in the church. It can bring me nothing now, except a deeper misery, a deeper consciousness of what I have lost. O Helga, if you had but known how I have loved you! Now, give me only your hand in parting. I must leave you here. The doctor will be back in a moment, and I will go to meet him. And you will—not forgive me, no, I do not ask that—but you will not judge me as others do, not judge me harshly?”

She had risen and now stood tall and erect before him; the tears still glittered in her eyes, but he read no condemnation in them, but a tender affectionate appeal.

“I do not judge you, Einar,” she said, in a passionate whisper as he seized both her hands. “I love you.”

They stood long hand in hand, gazing at each other with tear-dimmed radiance; then he clasped her tenderly, reverently in his arms and their lips met tremblingly in the twilight. Thus they stood folded close in the first happy embrace, I know not how long.

“O Helga, darling,” he cried suddenly, throwing his head back and clasping her face between his palms, “it is too terrible! To think that we must part after this!”

“No, Einar,” she answered in a clear voice of decision. “We must not part. Why should you flee from your post? I too have strong shoulders, and if our life will be hard at first we can bear its burden together. You



have not told me all yet; but my heart whispers to me what you have left untold. Better to face obloquy and live it down than to flee from it."

"Yes, be it so," he cried ardently. "I have strength enough now to meet whatever may be in store for me."

A loud cough with a palpably artificial quality in it was heard, and presently Van Flint was seen breaking his way through the underbrush with much panting and needless commotion. He held his hat and handkerchief in one hand and his spectacles in the other; the perspiration was pouring down from his bald scalp, drops of water gleamed in his bushy mustache and his coat had a broad rent across the shoulders.

"Ah," he sighed, fetching his breath from the bottom of his lungs and wiping his forehead. "The falls were deuced fine—really a sight for gods, I assure you. You don't know what you have missed, and it is well for you that you never will know. Really," he added with increased fervor, as an incredulous smile stole over Helga's countenance. "I am in dead earnest. It *was* a glorious sight."

The doctor continued with a sort of vindictive energy, which after all was not without a small grain of private amusement, to describe in detail the beauty of the waterfall, determined to establish the fact that his expedition had been a success, whatever they might choose to think about it.

An hour later they were all snugly seated in the tobacco-scented Icelandic study (though out of consideration for Helga the smoking was temporarily suspended) and the host heard with much heart-felt and heartily expressed satisfaction of the little drama which had been enacted during his ramble in quest of romantic sensations. He,

of course, feigned unbounded surprise, which he felt to be consistent with the demands of etiquette, this latter institution having, as he thought, been framed with a punctilious regard for the foibles of the feminine character. When the lovers had departed, however, and an exquisitely flavored Havana had attuned his mind to reverie, he could not help feeling slightly vexed at his own generosity; no tragic attitudes, no romantic regret, not to speak of despair. He had evidently not the stuff for a lover in him, not even for an unhappy one.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### VOX POPULI.

THE elections passed off without dramatic incidents. The enthusiastic torch-light processions of the past week with their glaring transparencies and promiscuous cheering from a Babylonian confusion of throats seemed a thing of remote antiquity, and the impartial rain descended in a cold drizzling spray alike upon righteous Republicans and unrighteous Democrats. There was an occasional enlivening of public sentiment whenever fresh bulletins were displayed at "The Citizen" or "The Banner" office, the contradictory statements of which, if they served no other purpose, at least stimulated the betting which was understood to be very animated in the bar-rooms of the Franklin and the Hancock hotels. There were also later in the afternoon the usual rumors of Democratic corruption, of which, however, nothing more definite could be ascertained than that the chairman of the state committee had telegraphed somewhere that five hundred votes "would settle it," and that an obscure Irishman had called at Norður's house to inform him that he had sixteen friends who entertained conscientious doubts regarding the merits of the contesting candidates. There was the usual number of partisans of Utopian schemes who hung about the polls, button-holing unsophisticated voters and trying to enlist their sympathies for impossible candidates and still

more impossible reforms. There were the ardent neophyte voter with ready-made convictions who deemed the exercise of his civic rights a great and glorious privilege, the pessimistic citizen who believed that the country was going to the dogs—voted a mixed ticket and held it to be a cheap privilege to choose between two evils; the apathetic voter who would have stayed at home and had yielded only to the importunities of partisans and the offer of a free ride, and at last the political manager and wire-puller who besieged the polls from dawn till sunset, thrusting his ticket into your hand and overwhelming you with a deluge of arguments if you appeared for a moment to be doubtful in your choice.

The doctor and Norderud spent the entire day at the office, sending and receiving frequent dispatches to and from their agent at the Republican head-quarters, mostly, as it appeared, of a highly encouraging nature. In spite of this, however, they were both far from merry as they walked home together after the closing of the polls; and Norderud could not refrain from expressing his serious misgivings. He had somehow a kind of feeling that it was going all wrong, he said, but even the worst might be good for something, and after all there was no use in whining. And the next morning when the result became generally known these gloomy forebodings were verified. Although victorious in the town the Republican ticket had been beaten in the county by a paltry majority of two hundred and sixty. "The Democratic Banner" had its reward.

This fresh disappointment mixed a strong dose of myrrh in Einar's cup of gladness. He was sitting in Mrs. Raven's quaint, rose-scented parlor when the vexatious news was announced to him. The old lady, who felt herself

powerless against Helga's placid determination, had turned to him as her last refuge, overwhelming him with blessings, threats and tearful entreaties. But when all appeals to his emotions had proved futile she suddenly bethought herself of a stratagem, and plunged once more into the debate with renewed vigor.

"It is perfectly preposterous for you to think of marrying now, Mr. Falconberg," she said, wiping a tear from a corner of her eye and assuming a severe air of business. "Helga knows no more of housekeeping than the man in the moon, and it will take at least one year if not two to make a decent housewife out of her. Why, she hardly knows the difference between a pie and a pudding. It was only the other day she was going to make pea soup, and instead of keeping the peas (it was hard Russian peas) in water overnight, she waited until the water was boiling and then she stood with a big ladle and stirred and wondered why the peas wouldn't sink. And after two hours of boiling they of course floated and were as hard as shot. And I nearly broke my poor teeth to pieces in trying to chew them. Now there, Mr. Falconberg, what would you do with a wife like that? It would be a fine household you two would keep together."

"Ah, never mind, Mrs. Raven," answered Einar, smiling with a happy unconcern. "I am quite ready to assume the risk."

"Oh Mr. Falconberg!" resumed the mother, forced once more into pleading, "if you would only be reasonable now and listen to one who is older and knows better than you do. She is such a headstrong child, though it is her own mother that says it, and I have said to her time and again, 'Child,' I have said, 'there isn't the man in the world that will put up with the sort of thing that I

have to put up with every blessed day of my life.' And you know, Mr. Falconberg,—you have seen enough of the world to know that that isn't the sort of girl to make a comfortable wife for any man to have."

Einar, who was getting a little nervous under this steady bombardment with small missiles, rose from his seat, went to the open piano and began to play an air softly with one hand.

"You know I don't want to be rude to you, Mr. Falconberg," continued Mrs. Raven in a slightly irritated voice and abruptly changing her tactics, "but if you will allow me to say so, you aren't exactly the sort of husband either that I had expected for my Helga. You must remember she is the daughter of a royal Norwegian official and her blood——"

"Mrs. Raven," interrupted Einar, suddenly turning his full, luminous gaze upon the small shrunken face of his interlocutor, "I have not thought of contradicting you on that point. I have not pleaded merit. I have only pleaded my love for her and her generous and faithful devotion to me. And there is something inexorable in such a love, against which your small utilitarian arguments will always remain powerless. I am sorry that we have grieved you, but I can only say that as long as your daughter remains steadfast in her resolve, I shall remain steadfast in mine."

Thus the interview ended, and Mrs. Raven, greatly impressed by the sudden peremptoriness of his manner, left the room with the consoling reflection, that a genuine Falconberg, even though he was no better than he should be, was at all events preferable as a son-in-law to an obscure nobody, whose only distinction lay in the unvarying rectitude of his life. Her experience with her own hus-

band and son, neither of whom had been what you might call a pattern of virtue, had disposed her to be as indulgent toward the foibles of men as she was rigorous toward those of her own sex. Men's lives were so much broader and more complex and their temptations so manifold. It was after all quite excusable in this handsome young fellow with his blue blood and aristocratic manners to fall in love with her Helga, while the latter's devotion for him could only be viewed in the light of an unmitigated folly.

As Einar returned home in time for dinner he found Norderud and the doctor seated together in the study. They both looked prodigiously serious, but he could discover no trace of anger or vexation in the features of the defeated candidate.

"Do I interrupt you?" he asked, pausing at the door, with a questioning glance at the doctor.

"No, no," protested both. "Come in."

Einar flung himself down on the sofa, and became absorbed in the contemplation of his boots.

"Finnsen," began Norderud with gruff friendliness, "or rather Falconberg, I should say, we are both in the same boat, it seems, and it would be folly for one to try to throw the other overboard. The doctor and I have been talking over your case, and it isn't as bad as it looked to me at first. If I was rather rough on you, you had better not think any more about it. We shall go on with "The Citizen" as before, and if you care to stay, I shall be glad to have you. You will have to harden your skin, my boy, for you may have to bear some hard hits, at first. But that will blow over, as everything else, and if we all pull together, we shall get into smooth water by and by. What do you say, old fellow? Is it a bargain?"

Einar sat for some minutes struggling with his emotion.

He had never fathomed the royal nobility of soul that hid itself behind that rough, weather-beaten countenance. He had never realized so keenly the far-reaching power of his own guilt, had never felt such utter unworthiness in the presence of any mortal man. With a blush of shame burning upon his cheeks, he lifted his head and saw that faint, lovable smile of Norderud's playing about the corners of his mouth. Van Flint was trying hard to look unconscious, as if this business concerned him no more than the man in the moon; but his transparent mask never lent itself readily to such experiments, and a triumphant smile (at first resolutely hidden under his mustache) gradually conquered the neutral territory, until his whole face beamed with pleasure.

"I will make no speeches to you, Mr. Norderud," said Einar, no longer pretending to disguise the fact that he was choking. "But here is my hand. If my friendship and my gratitude are worth anything, they are yours, as long as there is any breath left in me."

"Our friend, the doctor, is a great magician," answered Norderud, inclosing the proffered hand in his cordial grasp. "I have always told him that it was a pity he didn't go to Congress, where his bewildering eloquence might tell on the affairs of the nation, instead of getting moldy by being buried in books where it will have to wait for years before it will reach the light of day."

Einar, who fully understood the drift of this allusion, seized Van Flint's hand and shook it heartily.

"You have been too good to me," he murmured and hurried out of the room.

"I wonder what they mean to do with themselves when they get married," resumed the farmer after a pause. "I understand the young lady is in a great hurry."



"Yes, it must be admitted, she has rather high-strung notions about what she conceives to be her duty. She is determined to have a taste of martyrdom, and I believe she would be sadly disappointed if she should find her married life all smooth sailing. If she marries Falconberg now when his stock is rather at a heavy discount, she may safely count on a few severe snubs on his account, and I know she will accept them with sublime ecstasy. However, it is hardly fair in me to talk about her in that way. I never pretended to deny that she is a most marvelous woman—a miracle of strength, purity and unselfishness. I only mean to say that her ardor has its ludicrous side. I have had some compunctions of conscience both on your account and my own, that we didn't throw Falconberg overboard for her gratification. That would have mixed a larger share of adversity into their matrimonial lot, which I am afraid will now be too pitifully prosperous to call forth all the magnificent wealth of self-abnegation and sacrifice which she has so long been storing."

Norderud sat for a while musing.

"I have been wondering," he said, "whether it would not do to enlarge the cottage and make some timely repairs and then give them the rent of it; or perhaps add the amount to Falconberg's salary. But," he went on with a gesture of comic despair, "that vixen of an old woman would never in the world consent to being made comfortable. I have tried it time and again and she always throws up her hands and screams at me as if I had come to rob her or set the house on fire. She is very much like an imprudent old hen we used to have who persisted in roosting at midwinter in an apple-tree, where she would be sure to freeze to death if she was let alone.

But if you tried to take her down and put her into a snug coop, she would scream and kick and scratch as if the very devil was in her."

The subject of this criticism would no doubt have been shocked out of her senses if Norderud's estimate of her character had ever reached her ears. But she felt too securely lodged on her social eminence to suspect the presence of irreverent reflections in the minds of those whom she honored with her acquaintance. This evening, however, when the supper table was cleared and the precious silver safely locked up in its hiding-place, her mind was invaded by a strong temptation to pay an unannounced visit to Dr. Van Flint. Helga, who accepted this proposition as a sign that her mother was relenting, lost no time in carrying it into effect, and thus it happened that Einar found himself face to face with his future mother-in-law in the Icelandic study, placidly discussing with her the arrangements about to be made for the approaching wedding. Van Flint, who always treated the old lady with punctilious gallantry, was profuse in his apologies for the all-pervading odor of tobacco, the confusion of books and newspapers and in fact every appointment about his house that might be displeasing to the refined tastes of a lady of distinction. He thereupon beguiled Helga into a debate on the disadvantages of universal suffrage, choosing his arguments chiefly from the events of the campaign which had just closed with such a disastrous result.

While the doctor was yielding to the fascination of listening to Helga's voice, it suddenly occurred to him that he was neglecting his duties as host. The twilight was deepening and her fair face was growing indistinct. He rang for the servant, excused himself and went out to close the shutters. As he opened the door a confused murmur

of voices mingled with a discordant noise of metallic instruments reached him from without. The tumult was coming nearer and loud angry voices were now distinctly heard. He stood for a moment peering through the dusk ; a dark mass stretching from the garden gate down the length of the street was pushing up toward the house. A tremendous noise of tin pans, kettles and fish-horns suddenly shook the air followed by a hideous chorus of howls and groans. Van Flint slammed the blinds together, sprang in through the door and turned the key. Mrs. Raven rushed toward him white with terror.

"Merciful God !" she gasped, "what is it ? Oh, help us, Doctor ! Protect us !"

"Be quiet, my dear madam," implored the doctor, though his voice had a tremor in it which was far from re-assuring. "Be kind enough to follow me upstairs into my aunt's bedroom. She is down at Norderud's to-night, I regret to say. Miss Helga, come. There is no time to be lost."

The host supported Mrs. Raven's trembling form, conducting her up the winding stairs and Einar followed quietly with Helga.

"I am sorry on your account, Doctor," he said, "that this should happen. I am afraid they will ruin your garden."

"My garden !" cried the doctor, in a tone half way between irritation and amazement. "My dear boy, it is not me they are after. It is you. I knew this abnormal quiet must hide some nefarious scheme. But it is not too late yet. You may easily get out without being seen on the back side of the house, and then there is only a few rods to the woods."

"And you think I would leave you here alone with the

ladies? No, sir; if it is me they are after, they shall find me."

The shouting and blowing of kettles and horns were now heard right under the windows, and calls for "Finnson" became audible above the confused intermingling of sounds.

"There are several hundred of them," whispered Van Flint, peering through the shutters. "Let me go out on the balcony and speak to them."

"Not while I am alive," cried Einar, seizing his friend by the shoulders and forcibly detaining him. "I am not afraid of——"

A stone, hurled from below, dashed against the blind, and the glass of the window, splintered by the shock, fell in jingling fragments on the floor. Mrs. Raven gave a frightened scream and buried her face in the pillows of the bed where she was sitting. In the twinkling of an eye Einar had raised the window, torn the shutter open and rushed out on the balcony. Helga, to whom this movement was unexpected, was about to follow, but Van Flint caught her in his arms and held her back.

"Oh that this misery should come upon us!" moaned Mrs. Raven.

"Fellow-citizens," Einar was heard shouting, and the noise without momentarily subsided.

"You lost us the election by your d——d fooling," cried a rough voice in Norwegian.

"Quiet!" roared another. "Let him speak."

"Fellow-citizens," began Einar again, and his clear, strong tenor rose distinctly above the tumult below. "Listen to me for a moment. I know you are angry with me, and you have a right to be."

"Well said, young chap!" some one interrupted again in Norwegian. "He isn't a sneak, anyway."

"I should like to tell you the history of my life that you may yourselves judge of the wrong I have done. You have already heard one side. Now it is only fair that you should hear the other. My father, Bishop Falconberg, was a stern man who valued his fair name above all other things. I was young, and like many another young man I made debt. A Jew bought up all claims upon me and while my father was away, gave me the choice between imprisonment (for you know in Norway people may be imprisoned for debt) and immediate payment. I called upon all my friends to advance me the money, but they all failed me. Then in my desperation to avoid disgrace I did what I have since so deeply regretted. I wrote my father's name on a check and procured the money I needed at the bank. My father would himself have paid my debts rather than suffer his name to be disgraced. Mind you, I do not excuse what I did. I only wish you to know exactly what happened. Then after long wanderings I came here. I longed for a quiet life and useful occupation. I yearned to rebuild my fair name. If I had come and said to you: 'I am a forger from Norway. Please trust me and give me employment,' who would have offered me his hand for a welcome, who would have dared to repose confidence in me?"

"Hear, hear! he is right," cried a voice with a friendlier intonation. "Three cheers for Falconberg!"

The call was but feebly responded to, and Einar continued:

"The way I chose was, perhaps, not the right way, and I regret now, on Mr. Norderud's account and for your

sakes, that I preferred concealment to an open avowal of my past. My life among you during these years has been a life of toil, and if I am deprived of the labor in the pursuit of which happiness has, as it were, overtaken me unawares, I shall have nothing left worthy of a thought. If you cherish hostile intentions against me, then, indulge them if you see fit. Here I stand before you. I shall not try to escape. Away from here, with a long and dreary prospect of a roaming and futile existence—ah! I would rather die here, and die by your hands. I did ruin the election for you; take your revenge, if you like. And now I have told you all without restraint, not because I cared to exculpate myself, but because I felt the need of speaking. I have been silent too long.”

Einar had spoken under an impulse too strong to be repressed by any reflection regarding the nature of his audience. It had not occurred to him that that boisterous crowd, as it stood there before him, unindividualized, a mere dark, undulating mass of humanity, possibly intent upon mischief, was hardly the proper tribunal to appeal to for a vindication of his honor. To him, it somehow represented the large, half-abstract public which he was conscious of having wronged, and in spite of what he had said (and as he himself believed with perfect sincerity), now that he had regained his hold upon life, the need to vindicate himself had grown strong within him. Moreover, a Norwegian mob, even at the worst, is never a formidable affair; and the present one was really quite accidental in its origin. A dozen young fellows, who were rather envious of his good luck in winning, while on the brink of disgrace, the fairest maiden in the town, had assembled in the square with the harmless purpose of giving

him a cat-concert. The professional loafers, who were always abundant at that time of the day and eager for any kind of sport, had made common cause with them, and as the company proceeded up Main and Elm streets with jingling of bells, blowing of horns and clanking of pans and kettles, it found its size every moment increasing, like a snow-ball that grows as it rolls. I believe the prevalent emotion in the crowd at the time when Einar had finished speaking was surprise at the dignity with which they had been treated, and having suddenly become impressed with a sense of their own respectability, their original mission was temporarily lost sight of, and the American part of their nature asserted itself in loud demands for more speeches. The doctor was vociferously called for, and at last was forced to respond. In a very neat and well-turned little speech, he supplied much that Einar had left unsaid, and at the outset put the assembly in good humor by addressing it as "*My invisible friends,*" and threatening to commence a suit against the youth of Hardanger in general for the damage done to his flower-beds. When his eloquence had at last exhausted itself, the crowd made its retreat in quite an orderly manner, giving from the street, as a sort of after-thought, three cheers for the editor, and for the doctor three times three.

An hour later, when Mrs. Raven had recovered from the effects of the shock, the doctor bade his guests good-night, and Einar escorted them home.

Helga, although she had preserved an outward calm, had taken an intense part in the occurrences of the night, and when her mother had entered the house she still lingered with her lover on the piazza, being conscious of that after-quiver of excitement which somehow makes one loth

to part without having gathered (as by a *finale* in music) all the tumultuous emotions into a closing harmony. As she was about to speak, footsteps were heard approaching, and presently the tall, clumsy shape of Amund Norderud was seen outlined against the sky. He paused at the gate, struck a match on the sole of his boot, and looked at his watch. Under the strong illumination, his square Norse face, with its pathetic dullness, started suddenly out of the dusk which hovered like a misty aureola about it.

Iielga, without knowing why, clung more closely to Einar's side.

After a brief deliberation, Amund opened the gate, and advanced to where the lovers sat hidden in the shadow of the dead Virginia creepers, the skeletons of which were still clambering over the pillars of the porch.

"Good evening, Amund," came the girl's voice out of the dusk.

Amund started back a couple of steps, but collected himself and advanced once more.

"I only came—to congratulate you," he said (faltering a little), in his slow, heavy bass. "I called once before, but you were not at home."

"Thank you, Amund," she answered, cordially, and with her usual impulsiveness, stretching out both her hands toward him.

"I have known that this was coming—for a good while," he said, parenthetically, with a glance at Einar, who had also risen to offer his hand.

"You have been more sagacious than I, then," responded the latter. "I should have been a happier man than I have been if I had had any premonition of what was in store for me. I suppose other folks see those things better than one's self."



“Very likely.”

Helga blushed in the dark, but said nothing.

“If I had seen you when I called first,” resumed Amund, after a pause, “you wouldn’t have had any of those disturbances you have had over at the doctor’s.”

“I am much obliged on Helga’s account, for your kind intentions,” Einar answered, with a tinge of that patronage in his voice which a happy lover, however deep his pity may be, cannot help feeling for an unsuccessful rival.

“I suppose I mustn’t call you Helga any more, now that you are engaged.”

The words were thrown out at random into the air, but were evidently meant for Helga.

“Oh yes, indeed, Amund,” she responded warmly. “We are old friends, you know, and shall always remain so.”

Einar, I regret to say, was not quite generous enough to feel unalloyed pleasure at this reply, but he knew his jealousy to be absurd, and determined to conquer it.

The gate creaked on its rusty hinges, and Amund’s heavy footsteps died away into the night.

“Tell me one thing, Einar,” began Helga, nestling confidently against him. “I know it is foolish to ask, but you will allow me to be foolish for once. Have you ever loved any woman before you loved me?”

“Never,” he replied, with warm emphasis. “How could I, Helga?”

“I don’t know, dear. But I thought men usually did—love several times. It was a mere silly vow I once made that I would never marry a man to whom I could not be the first and the last. It is such a dear thought to a woman, you know, that the man she loves is as single-minded—as free from blighting experiences—as she is herself. I suppose it is hardly any merit in a woman like me, who has

never been much sought by men. A life like mine, I am afraid, is a fertile soil for impracticable ideals. But," she added, with sudden ardor, "I cling to them still, and it makes me so happy to think that they are, after all, capable of realization."

"Ah, dearest," he murmured, sadly, "do not shame me, now when you know what I am, and—what I have been."

"And why," she asked, with as near an approach to archness as a woman of her type is capable of, "do you not ask me whether I ever loved any one before I met you?"

"Because I know that you never did."

"It is true," she answered, groping in the dark for his hand, till it lay within her own. "I have had my foolish school-girl admirations, but I never loved any one but you."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CONCLUSION.

THREE years have passed over Hardanger,—slow and uneventful, as the years are apt to be in a Western community which has more than half emerged from barbarism, and is well advanced toward what in the West is called civilization. Outwardly the years have brought very few changes, and the town is yet very much what it was before,—a planless, cuttle-fish-like accumulation of brick and wooden houses, the ramifications of which now hold the whole hill-side, from the forest to the lake, in a somewhat loose and listless embrace. Like every Western town with metropolitan ambitions, Hardanger continues to draw large drafts on the future, and its hopefulness finds expression in a certain speculative ardor in business circles, and in an exorbitant over-valuation of the real estate in the immediate vicinity of the town.

“The Citizen,” which has been laboring faithfully for the quelling of the violent partisanships excited by the war, is enjoying a moderate prosperity, and has recently become a daily. Its editor, whose gentle, lovable nature, no less than his sagacity and rhetorical brilliancy, has gained him a wide popularity in social circles, still manages to wield a very weighty influence in public affairs, although he has hitherto stood rigidly aloof from all degrading political affiliations. Every one is ready to admit

that it is chiefly owing to his admirable conduct in the late campaign, that Norderud has just succeeded in obliterating the memory of his defeat, and has been returned to the State senate by a very respectable majority. No one dares breathe a suspicion against Einar Falconberg's fair name now.

His old enemy, "The Banner," has gone where all good Americans go—to Paris, where Mr. George Washington Bingham has established some new agency, and, I believe, writes occasional correspondences to leading Democratic journals. A less pugnacious successor, called "The Democratic Thunderclap," occupies the old offices of "The Banner," on the further side of the square.

As for "The Citizen," I would not, of course, assert that it gives universal satisfaction. It would be worth very little if it did. There are, even among the Norwegians, certain constitutional pessimists who look back in mournful retrospect to its early days, and declare with a sigh that "it is not what it used to be." But it is worthy of notice that these gentlemen are the very ones who, in those days, most vigorously espoused the pastor's cause, and, in spite of their incapacity for sarcasm, attempted to be humorous at Einar's and Norderud's expense.

It was the day after the election. In the parlor of what was formerly the Raven cottage, Einar and his wife were sitting. It was the after-supper hour—the delicious *dolce far niente* hour of the day. The parlor, although still glorying in some quaint Norwegian features, was no longer what it was of old. Some large bay-windows projected on the south and west sides (her oriels, as Mrs. Falconberg is fond of calling them), breaking somewhat the rigid monotony of outline; an open fire-place had been substituted for the old Norse five-storied monster; the

territory on the wall formerly occupied by portraits of the royal family had, to the great grief of Mrs. Raven's loyal heart, been invaded by Italian madonnas, chubby-faced angels, and other unevangelical creatures. Helga, who is now the mother of a boy two years old,—the exact counterpart, as she frequently insists, of one of Correggio's cherubs, minus the bassoon,—has changed but little since the days of her girlhood. Her fair face has still the same maidenly freshness as of old, with perhaps that slight softening of expression and contour which the superadded dignity of happy motherhood gives even to the plainest woman. The education of her son is at present her enthusiasm,—the all-absorbing topic of interest and conversation. Her eagerness to perfect herself in this difficult art had led her to the study of Froebel, Pestalozzi, and other educational philosophers, and she bears with the patience of superior knowledge, the banter of her husband, who pretends that he is unable to understand what relation these ponderous tomes can have to that tiny fragment of humanity, whose attention seems to be chiefly divided between feeding and sleeping. But Helga thinks she can well afford to be forbearing, because she is profoundly convinced that the right is on her side. She discusses with great gravity the future career of the marvelous boy, quite unconscious that her zeal has any humorous side to it. And Einar, if he were to be candid, would have to admit that, in spite of his occasional ridicule, he is not without sympathy with her folly. In fact, he is secretly of the opinion (and I believe he has confessed it to his friend the doctor), that the fantastic streaks in his wife's nature and the ardor she expends in doing little things make her tenfold more lovable in his sight, and, moreover, touches with a poetic flush the many humdrum

cares which marriage inevitably brings. The most serious difficulty they ever had was occasioned by her enthusiasm for phonetic spelling, which his philological learning led him to oppose with a tinge of asperity. On that question, however, she at length accepted his authority, or yielded to argument. Her present rapturous devotion to the kindergarten system he looks upon as comparatively harmless, and allows her to experiment with the babies of the neighborhood to her heart's content.

If Mrs. Raven's opinion is to be relied on, Helga is as yet hardly an expert in housekeeping. She is too much inclined to take a theoretic view of what she dignifies with the title of "the culinary science," and although her Graham gems and roast beef are above criticism, her more ambitious efforts often come dangerously near being downright failures. In her boldly experimental dishes she has, however, an unerring test by which she may judge whether they are successful or not. If Einar displays an abnormal appetite, and with a suspiciously innocent face demands a second plateful, she knows at once that something is wrong. And in the little *tête-à-tête* in the library which invariably follows, he ignominiously confesses his duplicity, and is, in return, initiated into the mystery of the culinary process; and even if, in spite of this explanation, the dish remains a failure, he generously allows the undeniable beauty of the principle to atone for the meanness of the result.

Helga has often admitted to her husband that the happiness she has found in her marriage with him differed widely in kind, though not in degree, from what she pictured to herself in the ardor of her girlish inexperience. And on this November afternoon, when the deputation of citizens who had come to thank him for his independent

attitude in the campaign had departed, she had seated herself on a low stool at his side, trifling with his watch-chain, as her habit was whenever she meant to coax him into compromising confessions.

"Einar," she said, lifting her eyes, still radiant with triumph, to his, "do you remember my saying to you, two years ago, that if you had been instrumental in Mr. Norderud's defeat, you were also strong enough to help him to a victory, which would be so much the sweeter for the taste he had had of defeat?"

"No, really, dear," he answered, with an amused expression. "I don't remember that you ever told me so."

"If I didn't, I at least *meant* to do it," she responded energetically; "I am sure, I anticipated in my thought all that has happened to-day."

Helga, like many a woman whose inner life moves with exceptional intensity, was frequently subject to illusions of this kind, believing that she had heard or said what, rising in her own mind, had impressed itself vividly upon her thought.

"I suppose I ought not to object to your magnifying my share in the victory, darling," he said, stooping over her and gazing at her with eyes full of affectionate pride. "But your own share in it is greater than mine."

"My share? I don't understand."

"Very likely. I mean that a great love is strong to save."













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